THE WEANED CHILD
NO. 1210

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"My soul is even as a weaned child."
Psalm 131:2.

I WAS once conversing with a very excellent aged minister and while we were talking about our attitude and feelings, he made the following confession—he said, "When I read that passage in the psalm, 'My soul is even as a weaned child,' I wish it were true of me, but I think I should have to make an alteration of one syllable, and then it would exactly describe me at times—'My soul is even as a *weaning* rather than a weaned child,' for," said he, "with the infirmities of old age, I fear I get fretful and peevish and anxious. And when the day is over, I do not feel that I have been in so calm, resigned, and trustful a frame of mind as I could desire." I suppose, dear brethren, that frequently we have to make the same confession. We wish we were like a weaned child, but we find ourselves neglecting to walk by faith and getting into the way of walking by the sight of our eyes. And then, we get like the *weaning* child which is fretting and worrying, and unrestful, and who causes trouble to those round about it and, most of all, trouble to itself. Weaning was one of the first real troubles that we met with after we came into this world and it was, at the time, a very terrible one to our little hearts. We got over it somehow or other. We do not remember, now, what a trial it was to us, but we may take it as a type of all troubles, for if we have faith in Him, who was our God from our mother's breasts, as we got over the weaning and do not even remember it, so we shall get over *all* the troubles that are to come, and shall scarcely remember them for the joy that will follow. If, indeed, Dr. Watts is correct in saying that when we get to heaven we shall, "recount the labors of our feet," then, I am quite sure that we shall only do it, as he says, "with transporting joy." There, at least, we shall each one be as a weaned child.

It is a very happy condition of heart which is here indicated, and I shall speak about it with a desire to promote the increase of such a state of heart among believers, with the hope that many of us may reach it, and that all of us who *have* reached it may continue to say still, "My soul is even as a weaned child."

I. First, let us think WHAT THE PSALMIST INTENDED BY THIS DESCRIPTION. We will begin by noticing the *context*, in order to understand him, and then, we will consider the *metaphor* in order, still further, to see what he literally meant.

First, look at the context and you will see that he intended that *pride had been subdued in him,* and driven out of him, for he commences the psalm with this, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty." We

are all proud by nature, though there is not one among us that has anything to be proud of! It makes no difference what our condition is—we universally dream that we have something to glory about. The Lord Mayor is not a bit prouder in his gold chain than the beggar in his rags. Indeed, pride is a kind of weed that will grow on very poor soil quite as freely as in the best cultivated garden. Every man thinks more of himself than God thinks of him, for when a man is in his highest estate and at his best, he is nothing but dust, and the Lord knows his frame and remembers that he is just that, and nothing better. Some poor creatures, however, indulge their pride, and let it run away with them as a wild horse with its rider. They cannot be trusted with a little money, but straightway, they hold their heads so high that one might think the stars in danger! They cannot be trusted with a little talent, but straightway, their genius is omnipotent, in their own opinion, and they themselves are to be treated like demi-gods. And if they are God's servants, they cannot have a little success in the ministry or in the Sunday school without becoming quite unpleasant to those round about them, through their boastful ways and eagerness to talk of self. Scarcely can they have enjoyment, even of the presence of God, but what they begin to make an idol of their attainments and graces, and begin to say, "My mountain, *my* mountain, stands firm. I, *I* shall never be moved." Great *I* grow without any watering, for the soil of nature is muddy, and the rush of pride takes to it mightily! You need never be troubled about a man's keeping up his opinion of himself—he will be pretty sure to do that—the force of nature usually runs in the direction of self-conceit.

This pride very often leads to haughtiness, domineering ways towards others, and contempt of them, as if they were not as good as we are. And if we see any errors and mistakes in them, we conclude that they are very foolish, and that we would act much better if we were in their position. If they act nobly and well, this same pride of ours leads us to pick holes in them, and to detract from their excellence. And if we cannot get up as high as they are, we try to pull them down to our own level. This is a base thing to do, but the proud man is always mean. Loftiness of looks and meanness of heart run with him, like a couple of hounds in a leash. The humble man is the truly great man! Because God's gentleness has made him great, he is sure to be kept lowly before the Lord by the Holy Spirit. The proud man is really little—no, more—he is really *nothing,* even in the things in which he boasts himself.

David could say, "My heart is not haughty." His brother, Eliab, said that David was proud when he went down to carry his father's present to his soldier brothers, but it was not so. His heart was content to be with the sheep—he was quite willing to follow the "ewes great with young." When he was in Saul's court, they thought him ambitious, but he was not so—he was quite satisfied to be a servant there, to fight the battles of Israel. The place of captain over a wandering band was forced upon him, but he would sooner have dwelt at home. And when he was king, he did not exalt himself. Absalom, when he was aspiring to the kingdom, was a far greater man to look at than his father David, for David walked in low-

liness of spirit before the Lord. Whatever faults he had, he certainly had not the fault of vanity, or of being intoxicated in spirit with what God had done for him.

Now, it is a great blessing when the Spirit of God keeps us from being haughty and our looks from being lofty. We shall never be as a weaned child till it gets to that, for a weaned child thinks nothing of itself. It is but a little babe! Whatever consciousness it has at all about the matter, it is not conscious of any strength or any wisdom! It is entirely dependent upon its mother's care. And blessed is that man who is brought to lie very low in his own spirit before the Lord, resting on the bosom of infinite love. After all, brethren, we are nobodies and we have come from a line of nobodies! The proudest peer of the realm may trace his pedigree as far as ever he likes, but he ought to remember that if his blood is blue, it must be very unhealthy to have such blood in one's veins. The common ruddy blood of the peasant is, after all, far healthier. Big as men may account themselves to be on account of their ancestors, we all trace our line up to a gardener, who lost his place through stealing his Master's fruit, and that is the farthest we can possibly go. Adam covers us all with disgrace, and under that disgrace we should all sit humbly down. Look into your own heart, and if you dare to be proud, you have never seen your heart at all. It is a mass of pollution. It is a den of filthiness. Apart from divine grace, your heart is a seething mass of putrefaction, and if God's eternal Spirit were not to hold it in check, but to let your nature have its way—envy, lust, murder and every foul thing would come flying forth in your daily life! A sinner and yet proud! It is monstrous. As for children of God, how can *they* be proud? I fear we are all too much so. But what have we to be proud of? What have we that we have not received? How, then, can we boast? Are we dressed in the robe of Christ's righteousness? We did not put a thread into it—it was all given us by the charity of Jesus. Are our garments white? We have washed them in the blood of the Lamb. Are we new creatures? We have been created anew by omnipotent power, or we should still be as we were. Are we holding on our way? It is God that enables us to persevere, or we should long ago have gone back. Have we been kept from the great transgression? Who has kept us? We certainly have not kept ourselves. There is nothing that we have of which we can say, "I did this and it is all my own," except our faults and our sins, and over these we ought to blush. Yet, brethren, when the Lord favors us, especially in early life—though I do not know but what it is almost as much so with us who have got a little farther on—if you get a full sail and a favoring breeze, and the vessel scuds along before the wind, there is need of a great deal of ballast, or else there will soon be a tale to tell of a vessel that was upset and a sailor who was too venturesome, and was never heard of again! We have need continually to be kept lowly before God, for pride is the besetting sin of mankind. Oh, that God would give us to be as David was—not haughty, neither our eyes lofty.

This is the first help towards being as a weaned child.

And next, he tells us that *he was not ambitious*—"Neither do I exercise myself in great matters." He was a shepherd. He did not need to go and

fight Goliath, but when he did do it, it was because his nation needed him. He said, "Is there not a cause?" Otherwise, he had kept in the background still. When he went into the cave of Adullam, he never lifted a hand to become king. He might have struck his enemy several times, and with one stroke have ended the warfare and seized the throne, but he would not lift a hand against the Lord's anointed, for, like a weaned child, he was not ambitious. He was willing to go where God would put him, but he was not seeking after great things. Now, dear brethren, we shall never be as a weaned child if we have high notions of what we ought to be and large desires for self. If we are great men in our own esteem, of course we ought to have great things for ourselves. But if we know ourselves, and are brought into a true condition of mind, we shall avoid those "vaulting ambitions which leap over themselves." For instance, we shall not be hankering after great possessions. "Having food and raiment," we shall be "therewith content." If God adds to our store of the comforts of life, we shall be grateful. We shall be diligent in business, but we shall not be greedy and miserly. "While others stretch their arms, like seas, to grasp in all the shore," we shall be content with far less things, for we know that greed after earthly riches brings with it slackness of desire as to true riches. The more hungry a man is after this world, the less he pines after the treasures of the world to come. We shall not be covetous, if we are like a weaned child. Neither shall we sigh for position and influence—whoever heard of a weaned child doing that? Let it lie in its parent's bosom and it is content, and so shall we be in the bosom of our God. Yet some Christian men seem as if they could not pull unless they are the fore horses of the team. They cannot work with others, but must have the chief place, contrary to the word of the apostle who says, "My brethren, be you not many masters, lest you receive the greater condemnation." Blessed is that servant who is quite content with that position which his master appoints him—glad to unloose the laces of his Lord's shoes—glad to wash the saints' feet—glad to engage in sweeping a crossing for the king's servants. Let us do anything for Jesus, counting it the highest honor even to be a doormat inside the church of God, if we might be such a thing as that, for the saints even to remove the filthiness from themselves upon us, so long as we may but be of some use to them, and bring some glory to God. You remember the word of Jeremiah to Baruch? Baruch had been writing the roll for the prophet, and straightway Baruch thought he was somebody. He had been writing the word of the Lord, had he not? But the prophet said to him, "Seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not." And so says the mind of the Spirit to us all. Do not desire to occupy positions of eminence and prominence, but let your soul be as a weaned child—not exercising itself in great matters.

Very often we seek after great approval. We want to do great deeds that people will talk about, and especially some famous work which everybody will admire. This is human nature, for the love of approval is rooted in us. As the old rhyme puts it—

"The proud to gain it, toils on toils endures.

The modest shun it but to make it sure."

But that man has arrived at the right position who has become, "careless, himself a dying man, of dying man's esteem." It is he who judges what is right before God and does it caring neither for public nor private opinion in the matter, to whom it is no more concern what people may say of an action which his conscience commends than what tune the north wind whistles as it blows over the Alps! He who is the slave of man's opinions is a slave, indeed. I would sooner go to some barbarous climate where yet the slave whip would fall upon my shoulders, and the cruel fetter would chain me to the floor, than live in dread of such a thing as I myself, and tremble with fear of offending this man and the other by doing what I believe to be right. He who fears God needs fear no one else. But he who reaches that point has undergone a painful weaning, and had it not been for that he would not be able to say, "My soul is even as a weaned child."

Frequently, too, we exercise ourselves in great matters by having a high ambition to do something very wonderful in the church. This is why so very little is done! The great destroyer of *good* works is the ambition to do *great* works! A little thing can be done by a Christian brother well; but if it strikes him, "I will organize a society to do it and a committee, a secretary, a president, and a vice-president," (it being well known that nothing can be done till you get a committee, a president and all that kind of thing), the brother soon hampers himself, and his work ends in resolutions and reports, and nothing more. But the brother who says, "Here is a district which nobody visits. I will do what I can in it"—he is probably the man who will get another to help him, and another, and the work will be done. The young man who is quite content to begin with preaching in a little room in a village to a dozen is the man who will win souls. The other brother, who does not begin preaching till he can preach to 5,000, will never do anything—he never can. I read of a king who always wanted to take the second step first, but he was not a Solomon. There are many such about, not kings but common people, who do not want to do the first thing, the thing they can do, the thing which God calls them to do, the thing they ought to do. No, but they must do something great. Oh, dear brother, if your soul ever gets to be as it ought, you will feel, "The least thing that I can do, I shall be glad to do. The very poorest and meanest form of Christian service, as men think it, is better than I deserve." It is a great honor to be allowed to unloose the laces of my Lord's shoes! A young man, who once had a small charge once, and only about 200 hearers, complained to an old minister that he wished he could move somewhere else. But the old one said, "Do not be in a hurry, brother. The responsibility of 200 souls is quite heavy a load enough for most of us to carry." And so it is. We need not be so eager to load ourselves with more. He is the best draftsman, not who draws the largest, but the most perfect circle. If the circle is perfect, nobody finds fault with it because it is not large. Fill your sphere, brother, and be content with it. If God shall move you to another, be glad to be moved. If He moves you to a smaller, be as willing to go to a less prominent place as to one that is

more so. Have no will about it. Be a weaned child that has given up fretting, crying, worrying, and leaves its mother to do just what seems good in her sight. When we are thoroughly weaned, it is well with us—pride is gone, and ambition is gone, too. We shall need much nursing by one who is wiser and gentler than the best mother before we shall be quite weaned of these two dearly beloved sins.

Next, David tells us *he was not intrusive*—"Neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me." I have seen many men always vexed and troubled because they would exercise themselves in things too high for them. These things too high for them have been many, but I will mention only a few. They have expected to comprehend everything, and have never been satisfied because many truths are far above and out of their reach. Especially they have expected to know all the deep things of God—the doctrine of election, and how predestination coincides with the free agency of man, and how God orders everything, and yet man is responsible—just as responsible as if there had been no foreknowledge and no foreordination. It is folly to hope to know these "things too high for us." Here is a little child that has just come off its mother's knee and it expects to understand a book on trigonometry, and cries because it cannot? And here is another little child that has been down to the sea, and is fretting and kicking in its nurse's arms because it cannot get the Atlantic into the hollow of its hand. Well, it will have to kick, that will be the end of it. But it is fretting itself for nothing, without any real use or need for its crying, because a little child's palm cannot hold an ocean. Yet a child might sooner hold the Atlantic and Pacific in its two hands, without spilling a drop, than you and I will ever be able to hold all the revealed truth of God within the compass of our narrow minds. We cannot know everything, and we cannot understand even half what we know! I have given up wanting to understand. As far as I can, I am content with believing all that I see in God's word. People say, "But you contradict yourself." I dare say I do, but I never contradict God to my knowledge, nor yet the Bible. If I do, may my Lord forgive me. Do not believe me for a minute if I speak contrary to God's word, in order to appear consistent. The sin of being inconsistent with my poor fallible self does not trouble me a tenth as much as the dread of being inconsistent with what I find in God's word! Some want to shape the Scriptures to their creed, and they get a very nice square creed, too, and trim the Bible most dexterously. It is wonderful how they do it. But I would rather have a crooked creed and a straight Bible, than I would try to twist the Bible round to suit what I believe. "Neither do I exercise myself," says the psalmist, "with things too high for me," and I think we do well to keep very much in that line. "Oh, but really, one ought to be acquainted with all the phrases of modern doubt." Yes, and how many hours in a day ought a man give to that kind of thing? Twenty-five out of the 24 would hardly be sufficient, for the phrases of modern thought are innumerable—and every fool who sets himself up as a philosopher sets up a new scheme. Am I to spend my time in going about to knock his card-houses over? Not I! I have something else to do, and so has every Christian min-

ister. He has real doubts to deal with, which vex true hearts! He has anxieties to relieve in converted souls, and in minds that are pining after the truth and the right. He has these to meet, without everlastingly tilting at windmills, and running all over the country to put down every scarecrow which learned simpletons may set up. We shall soon defile ourselves if we work day after day in the common sewers of skepticism!

Brethren, there is a certain highway of truth in which you and I, like wayfaring men and women, feel ourselves safe—let us travel thereon! There are some things that we do know, because we have experienced them—some doctrines which nobody can beat out of us, because we have tasted them and handled them. Well, if we can go further, well and good. But to my mind, we are foolish to go further and fare worse. If a man has reached the Land's End [the westernmost point of England], and some great genius should tell him to walk on farther than Old England reaches, and ridicule him because he will not go a step in advance into the fog which conceals an awful plunge—I think, upon the whole—he may be content to put up with the ridicule. Put your foot down, brother, and see whether there is anything under it. Check whether there is a good text or two underneath—whether there is a little personal experience underneath, and, if you do not find it, let the advanced thinkers go alone—you had better keep on the rock. "Prove all things"—do not run after their novelties till you have proved them. But what you have proved hold fast. Be conservative in God's truth, and radical too, by keeping to the root of the matter. Hold fast what you know, and live mainly upon the simplicities of the gospel, for, after all, the food of the soul does not lie in controversial points—it lies in points which we will never have controverted, for, "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." There is the food of the soul where there is no controversy in any devout Christian spirit! Exercise yourself, then, in the plainer matters, and do not imbibe the notion that you must read all the quarterlies and master, "The Contemporary Review," and the like, or else you will be a nobody. Be content to be just such a nobody as a weaned child is, and say, "I exercise not myself in great matters or in things too high for me."

The same evil comes up in another form when we want to know all the reasons of divine Providence—why this affliction was sent and why that? Why father died—why those two children that we loved so well were taken from us? Why we do not prosper in our various enterprises? Why? Why? Why? Ah, when we begin asking, "Why? Why? Why?" what an endless task we have before us! If we become like a weaned child, we shall not ask, "Why?" but just believe that in our heavenly Father's dispensations there is a wisdom too deep for us to fathom, a goodness veiled but certain.

We exercise ourselves in things too high for us, too, when we begin considering the results of duty and hesitate to do it. A man's course is quite clear in the word of God, but he says, "If I do that, how am I to provide for my family? If I do that, shall I not be throwing out a sphere of usefulness? I know it would be right to do it. My conscience tells me that I ought—but other people manage somehow to make notches in their

conscience, and they are evidently very useful where they are." Ah, my dear brother, pray God to lead you in a plain path, and remember, you have nothing to do with results, except to receive them as tests of your faithfulness. Results must always be left with God. For if the result of doing right would be that you lost your life, your Master tells you that you must hate even your own life also, or else you cannot be His disciple. You will get helped if you can trust, but if, for the sake of this or that, you do wrong—I do not mind how you put it—you are doing evil that good may come, and you are grieving the Spirit of God! Your mind will never get to be like a weaned child. It is not the childlike spirit to try to excuse yourself for maintaining a false position. The childlike spirit is to do what our heavenly Father tells us, because He tells us, and leave the consequences with Him.

Thus I have said enough, perhaps too much, about the connection.

Now, *from the simile itself,* we gather that the condition of heart of which David spoke was this—that he was like one who was *able to give up his natural food*, which seemed to him absolutely necessary, and which he greatly enjoyed. The weaned babe has given up what it loved. By nature, we hang on the breasts of this world, and only sovereign grace can wean us from it. But when we give up self-righteousness, self-confidence, the love of the world, the desire of self-aggrandizement, when we give up trusting in man, trusting in ceremonies, trusting in anything but God, then has our soul become like a weaned child. It has given up what nature feeds upon that it may feed upon the bread of heaven.

It means, next, that he had at last *conquered his desires*, his longings, his pinings. The weaning child has his desires strong upon him and he frets. But the weaned child is content, his desires lie still. And the child of God, when sufficient grace has come, feels no desires for that which once delighted him. He submits himself so completely to his Father's will that, if he is to do without, he does without. Paul said he had learned in whatever state he was there*with* to be content. There was another lesson which Paul had learned, but he does not tell us so. I have no doubt he had learned in whatsoever state there*without* to be content, which is a good deal more. To be content to be without, as well as to be with, is a high attainment. Not to have and to be as happy in not having as if one had all he desired is well. Oh, blessed state to be in! Not merely taken away from the breasts of earth, but taught no longer to wish for them.

Now, a weaned child is *entirely dependent upon its mother*. It knows nothing about how it is to be fed. It could not feed itself, and it must die if deprived of the care of another. But it rests quietly, free from even a trace of anxiety. I find that the Hebrew gives the idea of a child lying in its mother's bosom, perfectly satisfied. And David puts it something like this, O my Lord, "my soul lies in Your bosom like a child that has done with crying and fretting, and is weaned altogether." Oh, happy man who so depends upon God that he leaves all his concerns with the God of love, and sings sweetly in confidence in God!

Thus I have tried to describe the state which the psalmist intended by being "as a weaned child."

II. And now, secondly, WHAT IS THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS CONDITION? Why is it desirable to be even as a weaned child? It is excellent in every way. You will know it best by attaining to it, for when you are weaned, your desires will no longer worry you. Curb desire, and you have struck at the root of half your sorrow! He smarts not under poverty who has learned to be content. He frets not under affliction who is submissive to the Father's will, and lays aside his own. When your desires are held within bounds, your temptations to rebel are ended. You wanted this and you wanted that, and so you quarreled with God, and your Lord and you were seldom on good terms. He did not choose to pamper you, and you wanted that He should, and so you fretted like a weaning child. Now you leave it to His will, and you have peace. The strife is over. Your soul is quieted, and behaves itself becomingly. Now, also, your resentments against those who injured you are gone. You were angry with a certain person, but your irritability has ended with your weaning—you see that God sent him to do this which has troubled you, and you accept his hard words and cruel actions as from God, and you are angry no more. You do not kick and struggle now against your condition and position, and you no longer murmur and complain from day to day as if you were hardly dealt with. No, if God chooses to better your circumstances you will be glad. If He does not, you just take it as you find it, for you could not blame His providence. You give your thoughts to something better than the things of earth, for you now resolve as David did in the 132nd Psalm, which is very remarkable as following the psalm which contains our text, because there he goes on to declare that he will build for the Lord of hosts. When your own business is all right, and you are weaned from all fretting, worrying, and self-seeking, then you are free to undertake the Lord's business. He has done for you what you want, and now you want to do something *for Him*. You have sought the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things have been added to you, so that you are as happy as the days are long in June. Look at the birds in the winter. When there is not a leaf on the boughs they sit and sing. And in the early spring, when still the winter's cold is lingering, they pour out their very choicest songs—and yet there is not a lark or thrush among them that has an hour's provision in store. Not one among them has house or barn, or gathers anything, and yet, according to Martin Luther's interpretation of their song, they sing—

"Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow,
God *provides for the morrow."*

Happy is the man who comes to that condition! God bring us there.

When we are weaned we have got rid of the ground of future troubles and disappointments. We do not get weaned all at once from everything. One person here has been weaned from confidence in riches, but perhaps his heart, his affectionate heart, is clinging to some human love, some mortal joy. Well, brother, well, sister, remember that where your treasure is your heart will go, and if that treasure is taken away your heart must ache. If we trust in an arm of flesh, we make a rod for our own backs. You never lean upon a man or woman either, and steal away

from simple trust in God, but what you are preparing for yourself a trial. It may be in the treachery of the one you trusted. It certainly will be, if you live long enough, in the death of that beloved one. "Dust to dust," and, "ashes to ashes," will be the end of all earthly joy. If a building leans upon a buttress, if that buttress is taken away it must be weakened. But if it can stand alone, upon its own foundation, then it stands firmly. The man who depends alone upon his God, and whose expectation is from Him, has not half the occasions for trouble that he has who is leaning here and leaning there, and leaning in 50 places. For each earthly prop will be the cause or occasion of distress at some time or other.

III. I have very much to say on this point, but my time is gone. I will only close with the last inquiry, which is this—IS THIS STATE ATTAINABLE? *Certainly*. David said, "My soul is even as a weaned child." He did not say that he hoped it would be so. We can surely get where David got, for he was a man of like passions with ourselves. No attainment in grace is to be viewed as the monopoly of one man or one age. In fact, we have more advantages than the psalmist, for he lived under a much more poverty-stricken dispensation than we do. Now the gates of heaven are set wide open, and the treasure-houses and the granaries of our heavenly Joseph are free to all Israel. And, if we are at all straitened, it certainly cannot be in the Lord. He does not stint us. Did David say, "My soul is even as a weaned child"? Then no believer here ought to be content till he can say, "By the grace of God I am brought into that same condition." This sacred weanedness of heart is possible under any circumstances. The poor have often attained it. I saw this week a poor women, entirely dependent upon what was given to her by others, confined to her chamber, needing to be lifted from her bed, racked with rheumatic pain, and yet as happy as an angel. She was joying and rejoicing in the Lord, and one of her greatest pleasures was to sit on the side of the bed for an hour, when her pain was not so bad but what she could sit up, and get through a chapter or two. And then her heart took to itself wings, and soared up to heaven. Her soul was as a weaned child, she had no anxieties and no fretfulness. Those who attended her said that such a thing as a murmur never escaped her. Hear this, you poor ones! Well, and you who are better off may get there in the midst of riches, for David was a king, and yet he did not suffer his worldly wealth to canker his spirit. He was as a weaned child, though dwelling in a palace. He could get at the breast of worldly pleasures, and yet he was weaned from it. A man may be in this condition when he is tossed to and fro, and troubled. Business men are apt to say, "It is all very well for you ministers to talk about calm and peace of mind. But if you had to sell flour and bread, or measure out drapery, or look after a lot of clerks, or go into a large factory and see after a pack of work-girls, you would find it very difficult." My dear friends, look at David's life. How tossed about he was! What cares, what trials, what changes, what singular reversals of condition, and yet for all that, his soul was even as a weaned child! Do you think the religion of Jesus Christ was meant to be kept under a glass case, and that it would make good people of us if we were locked up in a cloister? No, it is a practical

everyday religion, meant for you that have factories, and you that have bakeries, and you that have shops. The religion which cannot stand the wear and tear of everyday life is not worth two pence, and the sooner you are rid of such rubbish the better. We want a religion which we may take with us wherever we go, that will keep us calm and quiet and self-possessed, because we are possessed of the Spirit of God. May we reach this happy state and never leave it.

What is the way to get it? The psalm tells us, "Let Israel hope in the Lord, from henceforth and forever." Faith blossoming into hope is the way of sanctification, the road to a calm and quiet spirit. You cannot say to yourself, "I will fret no longer," and then expect never to fret. No, brother, you must expel one affection by another—one propensity must be vanquished by another. You are too ready to trust in man—trust in God will push out carnal confidence. You are expecting great things of the world, that is foolish. Expect great things of God, and you will cease from carnal hopes. You are seeking from day to day for this world's good, you feel an ambition to rise—seek after the eternal good, and feel an ambition to get nearer to God, and the other ambition will die. You are worried by fears and anxieties—come and rest your soul upon the faithful promise, and, resting there, your anxieties will cease. I fear that many Christian people think that faith has nothing to do with everyday life. They do not expect to find that it relieves them of anxieties as to bread and cheese for themselves, and shoes and socks for the children, and all those little troubles and worries which concern a housewife and a father. But, oh, beloved, it is not so. The heathen had their household gods, and blessed be God, He is our household God, the God of all the families of Israel, The Lord hears the young ravens when they cry, will He not hear His people? The ravens only cry for meat, a dead rabbit or a pigeon is all they want, yet the Lord sees that their wants are supplied, and I find that "not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father, and the very hairs of your head are all numbered." These poor hairs? These little things! These trifling things! You will never be as a weaned child till you leave these little things with God, for the child has no great things. A child's matters are all little—though they are great to the babe they are little to us. Leave your little things with God. Leave everything with God. Live in God. Dwell in God. Have no secrets between yourself and God. The troubles of life which fret us most are the little things. If a man goes on a long walk, it is not the climbing, and it is not the slipping down the steep hillside, it is that nasty little stone which has got into the shoe which troubles him. You can hardly see it, but there it is, and it blisters his foot and lames him. Ah, dear brother, take the little stone to God. Ask Him to remove that little vexation from you, for as with God there is nothing great, so is there nothing little. The greatest philosopher in the world, or the greatest king, if his little child had a thorn in his finger, would not think himself disgraced if he stooped to take it out with a needle. And the Lord who makes all things, and calls the stars by their names, does not dishonor Himself when He binds up our broken hearts.

Go, then, to your God, and let your soul leave everything with Him, by faith being made as a weaned child.

"Easier said than done," says somebody. Yes, brethren, except by faith, but to faith it is easy enough,
and I boldly say here, I have sometimes found it easier to exercise faith than to talk about it. When I trust God—and I hope I do that habitually—I do not find that to give up anxiety and to trust in God is difficult now, though it used to be. Blessed be my Lord, I cannot help believing Him, for He loads me down with evidences of His truth and fidelity. Once get really into the swim of faith and you do not need to struggle, the sacred current of grace will carry you along. Give yourself completely up to the Lord Jesus Christ and the mighty energy of the blessed Spirit, and you will find it sweet to lie passive in His hand, and know no will but His. God bring you there!

If there is any unconverted person here who cannot understand all this, I pray the Lord to make him a child first, and then make him a weaned child. Regeneration must come first, and sanctification will follow. Believe in Jesus for pardon, and then you will have grace given to resign yourself to the divine will. May the Lord wean you from earth and wed you to heaven. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 130, 131.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—708, 778.

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THE HOSPITAL OF WAITERS VISITED WITH THE GOSPEL
NO. 1211

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

"Jesus said unto him, Rise, take up your bed, and walk."
John 5:8.

IT was the Sabbath day! Where would Jesus spend that day and how? He would not spend it, we are quite sure, in any unhallowed manner or in any trifling sort. What would He do? He would do good, for it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Where would He do good? He knew that there was one sight in Jerusalem which was particularly painful—the sight of a number of poor persons, blind, lame and crippled, who were lying round a pool of water, waiting for a blessing which seldom came. He thought He would go and do good there, for there good was most needed. Would to God that all Christ's servants felt that the most urgent necessity has the greatest claim upon them—that where there is the most need, there they ought to exercise the most kindness—and that no way of spending the Sabbath could be better than that of bearing the gospel of salvation to those who are most in need of it. But it was a feast day as well. It was a great festival of the Jews and Jesus had come up to Jerusalem to keep the feast. Where will He feast? Has someone asked Him to his house? There were Mary and Martha and Lazarus down at Bethany. Would they ask Him? Sometimes even Pharisees and Publicans would open their houses and make a banquet for Him. Where would He go? Was it a singular choice for Him to say to Himself, "My feast shall be kept among the blind and the crippled and the lame"? No, it was not singular, for He had said to one who had invited Him to his house, "When you make a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and you shall be blessed; for they cannot recompense you: for you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." What He urged others to do, He would be sure to do Himself. It was just like Him to say, "I shall spend My feast in n hospital. I will use this day, sacred both to joy and rest, by going where the sick lie thickly clustered together, for to Me to be merciful is to be glad—to bless men is to find rest for My heart." Christ never feasts more joyfully than when He is doing good to others, and the greater the act of His liberality—the higher the deed of power which is worked by His love—the more is His blessed nature filled with rest and joy.

See you, then, the Savior going down to the pool of Bethesda, determining that in the spot where sorrow and disease reigned supreme, He would exercise His mercy and overcome evil. I shall ask you to go with me, and with the Savior, down *to Bethesda's pool*. I shall call it THE

HOSPITAL OF WAITERS. While we are there, we shall notice that *Jesus Christ fixes His eyes upon the most helpless person among that waiting company*. And then, thirdly, we shall have to note with joy *how our Lord dealt with the man after a gospel fashion*.

I. First of all, I said we would go down to the POOL OF BETHESDA with its five porches, which I have called the hospital of the waiters—for all those people who were there were doing one thing—they were waiting. They were waiting for the moving of the waters. There was nothing else they could do. They were lying sick, with anxious eyes gazing upon the little pool, hoping to see it bubble up—to see a widening circle coming upon its placid surface—waiting to plunge in immediately, for whoever plunged in first would receive a miracle—one and no more. Said I not truly that it was a hospital of waiters?

Too easily may we find a large company of waiters now-a-days. I wish it were not so, but great numbers are *always* waiting. I think I know enough to fill all the five porches.

Some are waiting for *a more convenient season* and they have a notion, perhaps, that this more convenient season will come to them on a sick bed. Possibly, they even think, upon a dying bed. It is a great mistake. They have heard the gospel and they believe it to be true, though they have not accepted it. They go to a place of worship, continually, and they say to themselves, "We hope that one of these days we shall be able to lay hold of Christ, and shall be healed of the disease of sin, but not now." How many years have you been waiting, some of you, for the convenient season—five, six, eight, ten, twenty? I know some who have been waiting 20 or more years. I remember speaking to them about their souls and they said, then, that they did not intend to neglect the matter. They were waiting and the time had not quite come. They did not exactly explain what stood in the way, but it was a something that was to be gone in a few months—maybe even weeks. But it has not gone and they are still waiting. And I fear that they will wait until the judgment day will come and find them unsaved. They always reckon upon a good tomorrow, but tomorrow is a day which you will not find in the almanac—it is found nowhere but in the fool's calendar. The wise man lives today. What his hand finds to do, he does at once with all his might. Today is God's time, and whenever we are saved it will be our time. But, alas, many lie waiting till their joints stiffen, their eyes fail, their ears are heavy and their hearts more and more insensible. O you simple ones, will it be so, forever? Will you wait till you are cast into hell?

In a second porch, a crowd of waiters are waiting *for dreams and visions*. You, perhaps, think these are very few, but they are not so few as you imagine. And they have a notion that perhaps one of these nights they will have such a vivid dream of judgment that they will wake up alarmed—or such a bright vision of heaven that they will wake up fascinated by it. They have been reading in somebody's biography that he saw something in the air, or heard a voice, or had a text of Scripture "laid home to him" (as it is called). They are waiting, I say, till the same signs

and wonders shall happen to them. I bear them witness that they are very anxious to have this thing happen. But their mistake is that they want it, or expect it to happen at all, and lie there by the Pool of Bethesda waiting, and waiting, and waiting, as though they cannot believe God, but they can believe in a dream—they cannot confide in the teaching of Holy Scripture, but they can believe in a voice which they imagine to be sounding in their ears, though it might be the chirp of a bird, or might be nothing at all. They could trust their imagination, but they cannot trust the word of God as it is written in the inspired volume. They want something over and above the sure word of testimony. The witness of God is not enough for them. They demand the witness of fancy, or the witness of feeling—and they are waiting on the porch by the pool till that comes. What is this but an insulting unbelief? Is not the Lord to be believed until a sign or a wonder shall corroborate His testimony? Such waiting provokes the Most High.

A third porch full of people will be found waiting for *a sort of compulsion*. They have heard that those who come to Christ are drawn by the Spirit of God. They believe the doctrines of grace and I am glad they do, for they are true. But they misconstrue those doctrines. They suppose the Spirit of God makes men do this or that altogether against their wills, by exercising force. Their notion seems to be that men are taken to heaven by their ears or dragged by force and because we speak of cords of love and bands of a man, they pick out the imagery and mistranslate it. Now, believe me, the Spirit of God never acts by the human heart as you and I might act by a box of which we have lost the key. He does not wrench it and break it open. According to the laws of our nature, He acts with men *as men*. He draws with cords, but they are cords of love—with bands, but they are bands of a man. It is by enlightening the judgment that He influences the will. He leads us to see things in a different light by the instruction which He gives us and by that clearer light He influences the understanding and the heart. The things we love, we see to be evil, and we hate them. And the things we once hated, we see to be good, and we choose them. These persons fancy that they will be made to repent whether they will or not—made to believe in Jesus Christ whether they will or not. But it is not so that the Holy Spirit acts. Let me warn you of the great sin and of putting the Holy Spirit into contrast or rivalry with Jesus Christ. Now, the gospel is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." But for you to say, "I am waiting for the Holy Spirit," is to set up Jesus in a kind of opposition with the Holy Spirit—whereas the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit agree in one—no, They *are* one, and the testimony of Jesus is the testimony of the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit works in men, He works with the things of Christ, not with any new things. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. If a man rejects the gospel which says, "Believe and live," he rejects the Holy Spirit, who will not bring any other gospel, but leaves him shut up to believe in Jesus or to die in his sins. You must have Christ, or perish. And if you refuse to obey His gospel word, neither

will God the Father nor God the Spirit interpose to deliver you. Jesus Christ has the Spirit to bear witness of Him and when He comes, He convinces men of sin because they believe not on Christ. And then He leads them, not to trust in some work over and above the work of Jesus, but to rest simply and alone on the atonement which Christ has furnished. Woe to those who linger anywhere short of this.

A fourth porch is attractive to many people, especially at this peculiar time. They are waiting *for a revival*. We have heard glad tidings, in which we rejoice, of great revivals in different parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland. And there are some who say, "Oh, if a revival would come here, I would be converted." Or it runs thus, "If the two honored servants of God were to come here and hold services, then, surely, we would be converted." They look to men and excitements. I thank God for every genuine revival and, whenever He works, I rejoice in it. But for any man to suppose that the gospel command is suspended for a time until a revival comes, is to suppose a lie. The gospel says, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you." So said Peter on the day of Pentecost. Or, in other words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." The gospel call is, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." It does not say, "Wait, wait, wait till times of refreshing. Wait till a revival." I am inclined to think that even if a revival should come, persons who are now making it an excuse for delay would be in a very unlikely state to get a blessing from it. Or if they thought they got a blessing it would, in all probability, be a mistake, for they could be depending upon men, or upon fleshly excitement, and not looking away to Jesus Christ, who is as able to save them now as He will be in a revival. And He is just as able to save them by my voice, now, or by no voice at all, as He would be by any other man, however useful he may have been. I fear there are many waiting on that porch.

Many are waiting on the porch of *expected impressions*. They want an impression, and they wish the minister to preach a very alarming sermon. They want him to be very warm-hearted and earnest, as he ought to be, but they want him to fix them—to shoot the arrow into their flesh, that they may be pierced in the heart—for this they are waiting. They come here every Sunday. They have been touched a great deal and rendered very uneasy. They have felt as if they could hardly sit through the sermon, but they have managed to do it—and they have managed to wait—and wait. When shall I reach you? In what way am I to preach? Surely, if I knew in what way I could bring you to Jesus. It would be my delight to follow it. But I cannot preach any other gospel than the one I preach. And I cannot do it more plainly. Neither do I think I can do it more earnestly, for I desire the salvation of sinners with my whole soul. Many may preach it better, but none more from the heart. If you are looking for me to do something more, you will look in vain, for I have nothing better to bring. I have pointed you to a Savior's flowing wounds and bid you look to Him and live. If you will not accept His salvation, then, I have no other hope to set before you. If you will not trust my Lord,

not even an angel from heaven, if he should come, could give you any other hope. If men will not hear the gospel which I have preached, neither could they be converted though one rose from the dead.

Thus, I have shown you five porches of waiters. I will tell you why I am sure they are wrong in waiting. I will set before you their theory. Those people were waiting because an angel would come and stir the water—and whoever stepped in first would get healed. That was their idea. They were not looking to Jesus, any of them. Had they not heard that Jesus was healing the sick? Had they never heard of the woman who came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment and had the issue of blood stopped? Had they never heard of a nobleman's son who was on the point of dying, and was made to live? Had they never heard of all this? I do not know, but certain it is they never tried to get to Jesus, nor did they cry to Him. They trusted wholly to the pool, and the angel, and the stirring of the water. Ah, I think had they been wise, they would have said, "This is uncertain and only happens now and then. But Jesus says, 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out,' and He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. Had we not better crawl as best we can to those dear feet and look up into His face and say, 'You, Son of David, have mercy upon us'"?

There is the theory—the opposition theory to the gospel. I want to knock it to pieces, if God the Holy Spirit will help me—the waiting theory, the theory of looking for something, but not looking to Christ and to Him alone. These people attached great importance to *the place*. They stayed at the pool of Bethesda. There was the place. If ever they got any good, they would get it there. And so I find waiters often attach great importance to the place of worship—they expect to find salvation only there. Do you not know that Jesus can save your souls tomorrow morning in the tan-yard, quite as well as next Sunday in the Tabernacle? Do you not know that Jesus is just as much a Savior on a Saturday as on a Sunday? Do you not know that when you are walking in the streets, in Cheapside or in the Borough, if you breathe a prayer to Him, He is just as mighty to save you as He would be if you were on your knees, or at home, or sitting here and listening to the gospel? He is wherever there is a heart that needs Him. Wherever there is an eye that desires to look to Him with the glance of faith, there is Jesus. There are no pools of Bethesda now—no places set apart to monopolize the dispensation of divine mercy—

"Where ever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground."

Oh, get to *Him*, then, in these pews, for this is a place where He is. And if you were lying on your sick beds, I would tell you He was there. And if you were at a carpenter's bench driving the plane, or out in the fields driving the plow, I would have nothing more to say to you but this, "The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart, that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." This theory that we are to wait at the pool of ordinances is antichrist's gospel.

Christ's gospel is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

Then they say that they are to wait for *signs and wonders*. Those who waited at Bethesda waited for an angel. I do not know whether they ever did see an angel, or whether the water was stirred mysteriously by an invisible wing. But they waited for an angel—a mystery. People like a mystery, but the craving is evil, for albeit that the gospel is, in one respect, the mystery of godliness, yet as far as you sinners are concerned, it is the plainest thing in the entire world. It is this, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." He has God set forth to be a propitiation for sin. The blood of Jesus is a substitutionary offering to God's justice, instead of our death. And whoever trusts Christ to stand instead of him and so accepts Christ to be his substitute, is a saved man. Priests try to make a mystery out of everything, now-a-days, and this is that word which is written upon the forehead of the whore of Babylon, according to the Book of Revelation—"Mystery, Mother of Harlots." Her mass is a mystery and her ceremonies are all mysteries; the Latin tongue is used to make the service a mystery; the priest, himself, is a mystery; baptism is a mystery. Now, in the gospel of Jesus Christ, the essential truth is as plain as a pikestaff. Legible only by the light they give, stand the soul-quickening words—"Believe and live." A man who is almost an idiot may understand this. Trust Christ. Accept Christ to be your substitute before God and you are saved on the spot—saved in an instant. But no, they wait for a mystery. They pine for a mystery. They even suppose that the Holy Spirit, Himself, is to come upon them to confuse the gospel, whereas, what He does is to make the gospel yet more plain to us. And when He comes, He tears the mystery away, removes the scales from our eyes, and makes us see that it is a simple matter to receive Jesus and become the sons of God.

Again, these waiters who attach so much importance to place and are waiting for mysteries, appear to be waiting, also, for an *influence which is intermittent*. It was only at a certain season that the angel stirred the pool. So they seem to fancy that there are certain times and seasons when Christ is willing to receive sinners—and occasional intervals when they may hope to find salvation. Whereas the mercy of my God is not like the pool of Bethesda, stirred now and then; it is a well of water always springing up, and whoever believes in Jesus, whether it is 16 minutes to eight, or whether it is eight o'clock, shall find that Christ is ready to receive sinners. "All things are ready, come unto the supper," is one of the gospel proclamations. Ready, and ready now, not sometimes, but at all times—not now and then, not occasionally, on Sundays and high days and revival days, but—"Today, if you will hear His voice." "Today is the accepted time; today is the day of salvation." Therefore, because these people think that there is a certain intermittent influence; they believe that all they have to do is to wait for it in a very singular way. Oh, if I were to be hanged tomorrow morning, and I knew that an application had been made for pardon, I would wait for the result—but how do you

think I would wait? Suppose I had no hope of heaven, and knew I would be hanged tomorrow, but I had a bare hope that perhaps a pardon might come, I would wait for it—but how would I wait? Would I go to sleep tonight? Would I make a feast and make myself drunk with the drunken? Oh no, my life, my life, my life is in jeopardy. I cannot trifle. How do sailors on the wreck wait for the lifeboat? Are they idle, do you think? No, they are straining their eyes with looking and bursting themselves with their signals of distress, imploring help. Do they go to sleep on the wreck and say, "If we are to be saved we shall be saved; let us go to sleep"? No, they are waiting, but if there should come a rocket to the ship with a rope, they would be ready to lay hold of it in a minute and wait no more. It is a lie, nine times out of ten, when men say they are waiting for Christ, because they have not that awful anxiety, that sorrowful uneasiness of mind which goes with true waiting. It is only a make-believe waiting, a mere excuse. Whatever sort of waiting it is, it is clean opposite to the gospel which never says a word about waiting, but which commands men to believe and live.

Besides, these people are waiting for an influence supposed to be *very limited*. Only one person was healed at a time at Bethesda, and he was the first who plunged in. And so when the waiters hear of anyone being saved, they think that he was in more favorable circumstances than themselves, that he was placed in a better position for obtaining salvation. They seem to be in the rear of the ranks and unable to get to this wonderful pool of theirs. It is all a mistake. Jesus Christ is as near to one seeker as another. If a man has been moral, the gospel says to him, "believe." If a man has been immoral, the gospel cries to him, "believe." If a man is a king, the gospel commands him to, "believe." If he is a beggar, it bids him, also, "believe." If a man is full of self-righteousness, the gospel points him to Christ, and tells him to give up his righteousness. And if a man is full of vice and rotten with sin, it points him to Christ and bids him give up his sin and look to Jesus. The footing upon which the gospel addresses sinners is the same at all times. It has neither less nor more to say to the child of the harlot than to the child of the Christian matron. It presents the same pardon to the great sinner and the little sinner, (if such there is), and comes with the same rich blessing to the chief of sinners, as it does to the children of godly parents. Do not get false notions in your head. The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. Like faith obtains a like blessing. There is a limit, for, "The Lord knows them that are His," but in the preaching of the gospel, we are not bound by the decree which is secret, but by our marching orders, "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." He who bade me preach to every creature did not bid me exempt *one soul* from my message.

Thus, I have tried to show why so many wait and I will add but one thing more on this point. Some of these people who are waiting put a good deal of reliance *on other people,* even as this poor man said, "I have no one to put me in the pool." I have letters every week from persons in

distress of mind who ask me to pray for them, which I very cheerfully do. But as a general rule, I say to them, "My dear friends, I beseech you do not try to quiet your mind by asking me to pray for you. That is not your hope. 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved,' whether prayed for or not." I try to get them away from all reliance in anybody's prayers and to look to Jesus alone. Oh, do not say, "I will ask my friends to pray for me, and then be easy." You may say it if you like, but do not rest in that, I pray you. Remember Jesus Christ is to be looked to—not the best people's prayers. If you look to Jesus you shall have immediate salvation. But if the whole church of God were to go down on its knees at once and stay there for the next 50 years praying for you, you would be damned to a certainty if you did not believe in Jesus. If you pray for yourself and look alone to Jesus, you shall most assuredly be saved. Is not this enough about that dreary hospital full of waiters?

II. Now, a few minutes on the second head. Jesus Christ has entered the hospital, and He looks about Him. And He picks out THE MOST HELPLESS MAN IN THE WHOLE WORLD. I was pleased to notice on the bill of the services at the theatres a line which says, "The poorest people are the most welcome." That is a gospel sentence. Even thus is it with Christ. He always loves to give His mercy to those who need it most. There lay that man and he did not think of Christ, but Christ stood and looked at him. He did not know Jesus Christ, but Jesus Christ knew him, and He knew that he had been a long time in that condition. He knew that he had been sick 38 years. He knew all that—and He knew before the man told him—that he had often been disappointed, and, indeed, that poor wretch *had* been. He had often tried, as well as his paralyzed body would enable him, to get into the water. But somebody, even some blind man who had managed to get nearer the edge and had the use of his limbs, plunged in first and came up with his eyes open—while this poor nervous creature could not get into the water at any time. He had seen a great many others cured and that had made the disease more painful to him. But it had not encouraged him, but rather made him sadder. He was the most irresolute, soft kind of a man that you ever met with. Read the story of the man whose eyes were opened by Christ, who said, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." There is a fine hard-headed fellow. He might have been a Scotchman. But this man was all irresolution, shiftless, weak in mind. You know some such people—perhaps you have such in your family. You cannot help them. If you set them up in business, they are sure to fail. Whatever they do, it never succeeds. They are a poor, weak, childish sort of people who need to be put in a basket and carried on somebody else's back all through the world. There are people of this sort as to religion—and this man was a type of them. He sorely longed to be healed, but he did not hardly say that, for when Jesus said to him, "Will you be made whole?" he did not say "O Lord, I desire it with all my heart," but he went on with a rambling story, saying, "I have no man to put me into the water," and so on. When our Lord did heal him, if you notice, he did not ask Christ His

name, and, when he found that out afterwards, he went like a stupid, to the Pharisees, and told them directly who his benefactor was, and so got the Lord into trouble. There are still people about of this kind. They scarcely know their own mind. They know they need to be saved, but they hardly say as much as that. They are rightly impressed, but they get impressed the other way almost as easily. They are irresolute and unstable. Now, my Lord and Master picked out this very man to be the subject of His healing energy. To God belong wonders of grace. Did Jesus not say, Himself, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight"? "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confuse the wise. And God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are."

This poor, hapless, helpless, paralyzed man—almost as paralyzed in his brains as he was in his body—was pitied by our gracious Lord. Now, who is the most helpless man in this place? Who is the most helpless woman in this place? I know you are saying, some of you, "I am afraid that is myself." I have good news for you. You are just the sort my Lord loves to begin with. Do not be offended at the description, but be willing to take it home to yourself. Very probably, looking back upon your past life, you are compelled to say, "Well, that is really what I have been. I have plenty of wits about me in my business. I am sharp enough there. But when it comes to religion, I fear I am just that kind of fool. I have no resolution. I have no fixed determination. I am always being pulled by the ear by a temptation, or drawn the wrong way by evil companions." Now, my poor friend, lie down before Jesus Christ in all your helplessness, in all your stupidity—and pray the Lord to look upon you. A brother once said to me, "My dear sir, I wish you would never speak to anybody but *sensible* sinners." I said, "Well, I am very glad to preach to sensible sinners when they come to hear me, but so many stupid sinners come along with them that I am bound to preach to them, as well." And I do. I put the gospel to those that feel themselves to be insensible and stupid in everything—and who write themselves down among the fools. Jesus has come to seek and save poor lost, ruined, dead sinners, and I pray Him to look on you at this time.

III. Now, the third point is HOW JESUS CHRIST DEALT WITH HIM. If Jesus Christ had belonged to a certain class of ministers, He would have said, "Right, my man, you are lying at the pool of ordinances, and there you had better lie." He did not belong to that persuasion and, therefore, He did not say anything of the sort. Neither did He say, as some brethren do, "My dear friend, you should pray." Very proper advice in some respects, you know, but Jesus did not give it—He knew better. He did not say, "Now, you must begin to pray and wait before the Lord." That is a very good thing to say to some people, but it is not the gospel for sinners.

Jesus Christ did not say to His disciples, "Go you into all the world, and tell people to pray." No. "Preach the gospel to every creature; he that believes and is baptized shall be saved."

Well, what did Jesus Christ do to him? *He gave him a command*. "Rise, take up your bed, and walk." The words sounded like three thunderclaps. "But he cannot. But he cannot. He is paralyzed, good sir. He is paralyzed." Yes, but the gospel is a command, for we read of some who disobey the gospel. Now, a man cannot disobey what is not a command. He cannot be disobedient unless, first of all, there is a command. Jesus Christ brought the gospel blessing of healing to him as a command. "Rise," He said, "take up your bed, and walk." It was *a command which implied faith*, because the man could not rise and could not take up his bed—and could not walk of himself. But if he believed in Jesus Christ, he could rise and could take up his bed—and could walk. So it was really a command to exercise faith in Jesus and to prove it by practical works. "But the man could not do it." That has nothing to do with it. The power is not in the sinner, but in the command. He could not rise, but Jesus Christ could make him do so. And when I, or any other minister of the Lord Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, address you, chosen sinner, and say to you, "Trust Jesus Christ," we do not do so because we believe there is any strength in you, any more than there was in the paralyzed man, but because we speak in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, who has sent us to say to you, "Rise up and walk." I trust my Lord to send His power with the gospel.

I know right well that I have no power of my own, but He that sent me will bless His own message as He pleases. If you are to get salvation, you will get it by believing in Jesus and rising, at once, out of the state in which you now are. By His power, through the simple act of believing in Him, you will be made whole. The man believed in Jesus. That was all he did. Soft simpleton as he was. Irresolute, and all that, he had enough sense, and God gave him grace enough to simply believe in Jesus. He resolved that he would try his legs and to his surprise—oh, how astonished he must have been—those poor legs worked. He stood and found he could stoop and, rolling up his mattress, he took it up and walked away with it. What joy went through his frame. You have been ill, but the Lord has restored you and you have got up and found yourself able to walk. Was it not a delight to you? I know the sensation well. What must it be to be paralyzed 38 years? And then to be able to stoop and roll up a bed, and put it on your back, and walk away. It must have been a delight to feel new life leaping through his nerves and sinews and veins. Now, if a sinner says, "Well, I never did try it before, but by the grace of God I will trust my soul in the hands of Jesus—

"I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me,
And on the cross He shed His blood
For sin, to set me free."

Sinner, you will rise up and walk directly. You will be surprised, yourself, to find the mighty change which God is working in you by His blessed

Spirit through that simple act of faith. And you will go down those Tabernacle steps hardly knowing where you are, singing for joy because the Lord has taken you out of the hospital of waiters and put you among the believers. Has He not said, "Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert"?

Jesus Christ treated this man in a gospel way, for the way in which faith came into that man is very remarkable. The man did not know Jesus Christ—why was it he believed in Him? Why, it was this—he did not know who He was, but he knew He was somebody very wonderful. There was a look about Him, a majestic gleam about those eyes, a wonderful force in the tone of that voice, a power in the lifting up of that finger which was very different from what the man had ever seen before. He knew not who He was and did not know His name—yet somehow confidence was born in his soul. How much more, then, may faith come to you who know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? You know that He died and made a full atonement for sin. You know that He has risen from the dead and that He sits on the right hand of God, even the Father—that all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth, and that—"He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." Do not say, "I will try and get faith." That is not the way. If I want to believe a statement, how do I go to work? Why, I hear it and faith comes by hearing. If I have any doubt about it, I hear it again and ask to have it repeated to me more fully and, when I have heard it again, conviction flashes upon me. So Jesus, in the gospel, says, "Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." "Hear Me. Believe Me"—this is, in brief, the gospel which Jesus preaches to men's hearts. Now God gives His witness concerning Christ that He is His Son, for out of heaven He spoke and said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Will you not believe Him? The Spirit, the water, and the blood are always bearing witness, and these three agree in one. Believe Jesus Christ. The evidence is strong, yield up your soul to it and you shall find joy, peace, and eternal life.

The man's belief in Jesus, actively proved by his rising, settled the matter. A very different case is that from lying and waiting. Why, I should think this man, if he had wits enough, would go back and say to others lying and waiting, "What? Still lying and waiting? Why, I was lying and waiting for 38 years, and I got, by lying and waiting, just nothing at all. Neither will you." Simple as he was, he would have said, "I will tell you what is better than lying and waiting. There is a man among us, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and if we trust Him, He will heal us, for He heals all manner of diseases. If you cannot go to Him, send a messenger to Him, for He healed a nobleman's son many miles away. Only believe Him and virtue will go out of Him, for it is not possible that any should trust Him and not be healed." I think I should like to have been that man, simpleton as I might have been, to have gone to tell those poor

souls who were lying and waiting, the difference between lying and waiting and immediately believing. I would put it in the simplest way I could, for I was, myself, waiting when I was a child. I heard much preaching that led me to wait—and I think I should have kept on waiting had I not heard that poor Primitive Methodist brother cry, "Look, young man, look now." I did look, then and there, and I found salvation on the spot—and I have never lost it.

I have nothing else to say to you, but, "There is life in a look at the Crucified One," and every man that looks shall have it *here*, *now* and *at once*. Oh, that many would look. Do you understand it? Christ bore the wrath of God instead of those who trust Him. Jesus Christ took the sins of all who trust Him and was punished in the place of every believer, so that God will not punish a believer because He has punished Christ for him. Christ died for the man who believes in Him, so that it would be injustice on the part of God to punish that man, for how shall He punish twice for the same offense? Faith is the seal and evidence that you were redeemed 1,900 years ago upon the bloody tree of Calvary. And you are justified and who shall lay anything to your charge? "It is God that justifies you: who is he that condemns you? It is Christ that died; yes, rather, that is risen again." This is the gospel of your salvation. "Oh, but I do not feel." Did I say anything about feeling? You shall have feeling after you have faith. "But I am not right." I do not care what you are or are not. Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes in Me has everlasting life." "Oh, but—" Away with your "buts." Here is the gospel—"Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely. The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.'" And what both the Spirit and the bride of Christ say, surely I may say and do say. And may God bless the saying of it. And may you accept it, you waiting ones. May you look, believe, and live, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
John 4:46; 5:1-16.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—538, 505, 546.

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FAITH AND ITS ATTENDANT PRIVILEGES
NO. 1212

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

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them which believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:11-13.

ACCORDING to this text, the principal matter in our salvation is faith. Faith is described as "receiving" Jesus. It is the empty cup placed under the flowing stream. It is the penniless hand held out for heavenly alms. It is also described in the text as "believing on His name." And this reception, this *believing*, is the main thing in real godliness. Faith is the simplest thing conceivable! When we hear people sing, "Only believe and you shall be saved," they sing the truth, for we have the divine assurance that, "whoever believes on Him is not condemned." The gospel message is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." The act of faith is the simplest in the world. It may be performed by a little child. It has often been performed by persons so short-witted that they have been almost incapable of any other intellectual act. And yet faith is as sublime as it is simple, as potent as it is plain! It is the connecting link between impotence and omnipotence, between necessity and all-sufficiency. He that by faith lays hold on God has accomplished the simplest and yet the grandest act of the mind. Faith is apparently so small a matter that many who hear the gospel can hardly believe it possible that we can really mean to teach that it brings salvation to the soul. They have even misunderstood us and imagined that we have meant to say that if persons believed they were saved, they were saved.

If that were the doctrine of justification by faith, it would be the most wicked of delusions. It is not so! Faith in Jesus as our Savior is a very different thing from persuading ourselves to believe that we are saved when we are not! We believe that men are saved by faith, alone—but not by a faith which is alone. They are saved by faith without works, but not by a faith which is without works. The faith which saves is the most operative principle known to the human mind, for he that believes in Jesus for salvation, being saved, and knowing that he is saved, loves Him that saved him—and that love is the key of the whole matter! The loving believer ceases from everything which would displease Him whom he loves. He tries to abound in that which will please Him, his beloved Redeemer. So salvation becomes the great reason for gratitude and changes the heart! And, the heart being changed, all the issues of life are changed.

The man is like a watch which has a new mainspring—not a mere face and hands repaired—but new inward machinery with freshly adjusted works which act to a different time and tune. And whereas he went wrong before, now he goes right, because he is right within. Faith is so simple that the little child who believes becomes, before long, strong in the Lord. It is a vital force which gets such mastery over men that it makes them other men than they ever were before! And as it grows, it lifts them up from being mere men, to be men of God, and then beyond that it leads them on till they become heroes and they stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of flames, obtain promises and enter into rest. Faith, the size of a grain of mustard seed, develops into faith that moves mountains! Faith of the little child increases into faith of the giant! May we know by *experience* how true this is!

Our object is to show what faith does. And, oh, while I am trying to speak of this great gift of the Lord to men by which they obtain every other gift, may many of you who have not believed come to believe in Jesus! If you do, there is nothing in this text but what shall certainly be yours.

I. We shall begin by saying that FAITH MAKES THE GRANDEST OF DISTINCTIONS AMONG MEN.

This is clear from the text. Faith makes the grandest distinctions among men, for the text begins, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not," that is one company—"but as many as received Him"—that is another company. Were an angel to come here with a drawn sword and to suddenly separate the righteous from the wicked with one stroke, you would find that his sword had for its edge the question, "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?" This divides men into saved believers and unbelievers with the wrath of God abiding on them. "He that believes has passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation; but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God." There are many distinctions among men—some proper and some improper—and there always will be such distinctions while this age lasts. There are rich and poor—and I fear there never will be a form of society in which there will be no poor. Even in the kingdom of Christ, when He comes, it seems there will be poor, for He shall judge the poor and needy. There will be the governors and the governed; the wise and the foolish; the teachers and the taught. But, mark you, these distinctions pass away. The grave is an awful leveler. There in the sepulcher Caesar is no more than his vassal; Socrates no greater than the slave who washed his feet. The great emperor who swayed the scepter has, in the tomb, no higher rank than the bondwoman who toiled at the mill. Death recognizes no caste, the sepulcher believes in equality. At the judgment seat, temporal distinctions will not be recognized except so far as they involve responsibility—and so far as that point goes, some of the great and mighty will then wish that they had been slaves—and regret that they cannot hide their heads among those

whom they oppressed! The grand distinction which will outlast all time is that of faith or lack of faith. Do you believe or do you doubt? This makes the broad line of distinction! To the receivers of Christ or the non-receivers—to which do you belong, dear friend?

I want you to observe that the faith which makes the distinction is described here as *a receptive faith*. Saying faith becomes a working faith by degrees, but at first it is a receptive faith. And in fact, work as it may, afterwards, it must always be a receptive faith. We only work out our salvation as God works in us—and even the highest actions that are ever done for God are performed with the strength which God supplies. Working faith is merely receptive faith in action. A receiving faith is the vital point and it is absolutely necessary that the soul should receive Jesus to be its all in all. "To as many as received Him." Have you ever received *Him*, the Lord Jesus, the real Christ? Do you talk to Him? Do you know Him? Is He a companion? Is He a friend of yours? If you have received a personal Christ by confiding, trusting and depending upon Him, you are on the safe side of the house!

The text further says, "Even to them that believe *on His name*." Now, what is it to believe on His name? It struck me it would be a fair and a right way of illustrating the text to notice what are the names which are used in the former verses of this chapter. Please notice, in the first chapter of John, where our text is, what name of Jesus is used. "In the beginning was *the Word"*—that is the first name. The Word. What is the meaning of that? Why is Jesus Christ called the Word? Why, because, brethren, if I want to communicate to you by writing or by speech, I use a word. My thought is here—and there is your mind. I could get the thought partly to your mind by a picture—that is what God has done in nature. But we cannot use pictures for a full communication of knowledge—we must employ words. So God, wanting to speak to man, spoke by sending Christ and Christ is God's word. Have you ever received Christ as God's word to you? Will you just think of it, what a wonderful word He was? God said, "Men, stand no longer at a distance from Me. I will come and dwell among you"—33 years, the Son of God dwelt among the sons of men! "Men," He said, "men, I must punish your sins." There hung His Son bleeding on the tree for sin—God saying in a wonderful way—"I hate sin and therefore Jesus must die." The Lord next cries, "Men, I can now be just and yet can justify you. Come unto Me." There is Jesus risen from the dead, in newness of life, and He goes into heaven a man and, as man, is received to the throne of God—and thus, God says in a word to us, "I am willing to receive you up to My very throne." Actions speak louder than words, but Christ, Himself, is the word, the love-word, the tender word, the very heart-word of God—with acts attending and following which make His utterance the more convincing. God kept nothing back when He spoke Christ. He spoke that word and that word is the fullness of God's soul to sinners. Have you ever accepted Christ as the word between you and God? Have you ever

spoken to God that word back again by pleading the name of Christ? Lord, there is no communication between me and You except this. Whenever You speak, you say, "Christ," and my reply is, "Christ." When I want You to pardon me, I say, "Christ." When I need You to bless me, indeed, and give me answers to my prayers, I plead, "Christ." That is the word from God to man, and back again from man to God. Now, to as many as believe on His name as the word, to them He gives power to become the sons of God. But many have never accepted Him as, "the word," any more than if God had never spoken. They are deaf. At any rate, there is the word and they have never received it.

Look down the chapter and you will find that Jesus is described as *the life*. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life." Have you believed on His name as the life? Man is *dead* by nature. When God said to Adam, "In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die," Adam did die that very day and that is the key word to what is meant by death in the Scriptures. Did he cease to exist? No, nor will you. But he ceased to live and that is a very different thing. To exist is not to live; there is a wide distinction there. To die is not to cease to exist—no thoughtful man should fall into such an error. What is death? Practically, it is the separation of a living being into its component elements. When the seed is put into the ground, the apostle says, it is not quickened unless it dies, or dissolves into its constituent elements. It dies in order more perfectly to live. When we die, neither body nor soul ceases to exist, but they cease to be united and their separation is death. When a soul departs (and the life of the body is the soul), the life of the body is gone. When a soul dies, it is separated from God, for union to God is the soul's true life. That is the death which Adam died and which every impenitent sinner will have to die. No, that is the death which every sinner is under now, for, "He that believes not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Listen well that, "He that believes not has not life." He has an existence and always will have, but he has not life—he abides in death. But as for the man, who believes in Jesus, he gets back his God and that is his life. Jesus says, "He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that lives and believes in Me shall never die." "I am the resurrection and the life." When we are brought back to God, God has made our soul alive. A soul without God is like a fair palace which has been deserted—you pace through all its halls and there is not a sound. It is all death, decay, and emptiness. But when the king comes back, again, to his palace, the merry bells peal out their joyful notes! All is rejoicing and there is life again throughout the house. God is the life of the soul and as many as receive God in Christ, receive the life.

Now see, Jesus is first the word, that is God speaking to men; secondly the life, that is God quickening man and dwelling in him. Have we so received the Christ of God?

Note the third name here. "In Him was life, and the life was the *light* of men." Notice that this name of Jesus is repeated many times if you read through the chapter. "John came for a witness to bear witness of the *light*. He was not that *light*, but he was sent to bear witness of that *light*. That was the true *light*," and so on. So that the next name of Christ we have in this chapter is the *light*. Have we received Christ as the light? What is it to have Christ to be your light? What is light? It is that by which we see. Everybody sees in a light. Take an illustration—only an illustration. A merchant comes to a city, town, village. He calculates whether it is a good place for business. "Bad place, this," he says. "A man cannot live here. It is a bad situation." And he is not content unless he gets near the Bank or in Lombard Street, or some other business quarter. Now, look at the artist. He has another light. You take that artist into the city and he says, "I could not live here in this dreary wilderness of brick, amid these fogs! Let me get away to North Wales, or somewhere where the picturesque is to be seen." And he settles himself down in Bettws-y-coed, and he says, "This is beautiful." Take the rich man there and say to him, "You are to live here for 20 years." "Twenty years?" he says, "I could not live here a month! It is preposterous. This is not a place where a man can live." Bring a man of gaiety into a religious circle and he says, "O, I need a place where there is some life." I have been traveling, sometimes, where I thought the scenery very beautiful and I have heard young men say, "This is a hateful place: there is no life here." Everybody sees according to the light he sees by. My dear hearer, have you ever seen things in the light of Christ? Did you ever feel, "This is the place where I can live, for here are Christians with whom I can commune. Here is the gospel preached and my soul will be fed here. I shall learn much of Christ. This is a sphere in which I can be useful"? When you have life you will get light—and you will see things in that light. You will see yourself in the light of Christ. You will say, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." Everything looks according to your light. Yellow spectacles will make everything look yellow, but get the true light, the only light that can lighten any man that comes into the world, and things will be seen in truth. If you get Christ within you, you have light, indeed! So the question comes back—have we believed on the name of Jesus as the Word, the life and the light? If we have, it has made a distinction between us and others, and there is a deep gulf fixed between us, across which, thank God, men may come to us by sovereign grace, but across which we shall never return—for he that has received the *word* will find in it an incorruptible Seed! He that has received the *life* has received with it the assurance, "Because I live, you shall live also." And he that has received the *light* knows that it shines more and more unto the perfect day.

This distinction, then, is a very grand one and it is one which obliterates all others, for the text puts it, "*As many* as received Him"—that is, if the chimney-sweep receives Christ, he is a child of God, and if the Czar of Russia receives Christ, he is a child of God—but not the one more

than the other. If they receive Him—that is the point—they become the sons of God! It is a distinction, therefore, which is to be sought after abundantly by us, and which has to do with present things. "As many as received Him, to them *gave* He power to become the sons of God." Now I charge you, do not think of religion as a thing to be run after when you die, as your friends may seek after an undertaker to bury you. My bell sometimes sounds at the dead of night or at three in the morning. "Would you come and pray for a dying person?" They even say, "Pray *to* some dying person." Why do they send for me? Why do they not think of sending for me when the man is in good health? They send for me when the man has taken stupefying drugs, perhaps, to lull pain, or he is half asleep with coming death, or his suffering is so intense that he cannot think! Or if he can think, he counts on my coming and my visit rather ministers to his superstition than to his benefit! Religion is for life as well as death. It is for today. "*Now* are we the sons of God." Oh, have the gospel today, today, today, today! It is said that every man ought to repent on the last day of his life—this day may be yours—"Therefore, today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." I have many things to say unto you, but time flies and I have much more left. This is the first head, then. Faith makes the grandest of all distinctions.

II. Secondly, FAITH OBTAINS THE GRANDEST OF ALL ENDOWMENTS. Read, "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." The margin says the "privilege." The margin is right, but so is the common reading. The word *exousia* is a very great word in the Greek. It cannot be comprehended in the word, "privilege," at all. It means power, privilege and a great deal more. Everyone that has believed in Jesus has received the privilege, the power, and everything else that lies in being a son of God. This is described as being a privilege peculiar to believers and yet there are rogues who are everlastingly talking about the "fatherhood" of God because He made them. I suppose the man who made that table is the father of the table. They assert that the Creator is the Father of all His creatures. That is not the sense in which believers say, "Our Father which art in heaven." If you are children of the devil and doing his works, why call God your Father? How dare you? If you have not believed on the Son of God, He is not your Father in the sense of the text—and you have no right to think of yourself as His son! The privilege of the text is, "to as many as received Him," for, "to them gave He the power" or, "the *privilege* to become the sons of God." As for the unbeliever, what is written concerning him? "The wrath of God abides on him."

Now, there is a distinction intended here in the use of this word, "son," rather than the old legal word servant. The most that they could attain to under the old dispensation was to be servants. "Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant." Yes, that is all. And what a blessed thing to be a servant of God! The poor prodigal would have been glad enough to have been one of the hired servants. But says our Master, "Henceforth I call

you not servants, for the servant knows not what his Lord does, but I have called you friends." And we know who has said, "For this cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren," because they are sons in the same house. Oh, what a pleasure to rise from slavery to sonship! From the bondage of the law to the glorious liberty of the children of God! And that is where we all are who have believed. Only sometimes, you know, we do not live up to this sonship privilege. Those who are under the law do not rise to sonship. They may be sons, but they are in their minority and the child, while he is yet in his minority, differs little from a servant, though he is lord of all. He is under tutors until he is of age. Christ has come and we are no longer under a schoolmaster, but now, blessed be His name, we are the sons of God! Are we not His servants, too? O, yes! Jesus Christ was first His Father's son and then His Father's servant. So we, being sons, have the joy of serving our Father. And I tell you it is a very different thing to serve your Father to what it is to serve a mere prince or ruler.

We are sons, then, rather than servants. We are called sons of God because of our new nature. We are the children of God by birth. We are also sons by likeness, for the Spirit of God dwells in us and we are made like unto God. The likeness between a son of God and God, Himself, is real and true. Have you ever seen the likeness between yourself and your child? Yes. Yes, he is very much like you. Some points of his character are caricatures of yours! You can see your image, distorted somewhat, and imperfect, but it is yourself. It is as near like yourself as a child can be like a man—but a child is not a man, for all that. So God makes His children like Himself, but they are miniatures, they are little, childish, weak. There are many imperfections and shortcomings, but still, mark that word, I often stagger as I read it—"He has made us partakers of the divine nature." In moral qualities and spiritual actualities, He has given us power to become the sons of God, that is, by making us like unto God, showing us that as He is who was the chief Son, so are we, also, in this world. Oh, the privilege of this! I assure you I would enlarge upon it if I did not feel that I am quite incompetent. I can only stand as John did when he wanted to tell us about it, and could only cry, "Behold," as much as to say—"Look yourself, I cannot tell you!" "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God." We are such by prerogative, by nature, by growing like He, and by privilege. We are now the sons of God.

Some of you do not know what this means. Children, you know, take many liberties with their father and are very familiar. I wonder what the little children of a judge think of him if they are ever taken into court to see him with his big wig on, sitting there trying prisoners? Well, I have no doubt they feel a great awe of him. But you should see him when he is at home! Why there he is down on the hearth-rug with the children on his back! He is the father and the father somehow swallows up the judge. And the child does not seem to remember that he *is* a judge, but only

that he is his father. Oh, how many times has my soul, while prostrate with awe in the presence of my God, laid hold on Him and said, "My *Father*, great as You are, You are not so great as to forget that You are my Father. You have taught me to say it, You have said, 'When you pray, say, 'Our Father,' and I do say it, and I feel that, 'Abba, Father,' is the natural cry of the spirit that is within me. Will you not answer to the cry?" He does answer us and like as a father pities his children, He pities us. He bows His omnipotence to help us in our little labors—and bows His mighty arms to help us in our little troubles. "He counts the number of the stars, and calls them all by their names. He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." Is not that a grand stoop from rolling the orbs and wheeling the worlds along, to stoop down to bind broken hearts and to strap their wounds with heaven's court plaster lest they should bleed too much? Blessed be his name!—

"The God that rules on high,
And thunders when He pleases.
That rides upon the stormy sky
And manages the seas—
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our love!
He shall send down
His heavenly powers
To carry us above."

But we must pass on. Faith makes the grandest of distinctions and obtains the grandest of endowments.

III. Thirdly, FAITH IS THE EVIDENCE OF THE GRANDEST EXPERIENCE, for the text speaks of, "Them that believe on His name which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God." This teaches us that every man who believes in Jesus is a regenerate man. He has been born of God! What a wonderful thing it is to be born again! There are poor blind men about who say that persons are regenerated by the application of water, though they have no faith, and grow up without any! May the Lord open their eyes! We will say no more, but wherever there is true regeneration, there must be faith. Read the third chapter of John. See how faith and regeneration run together. Read this very passage—"To as many as believe on His name which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of man." Faith is the first, the unique token of being born again. Now, what is it to be born again? I saw a big man once. A strong, rough fellow, and he was evidently under conviction of sin. He said, "Would God I had never been born." He thought again and he said, "I remember when I used to pray at my mother's knee. I knew nothing, then, of the wickedness and vice through which I have gone. Would God I could begin life again like a little child!" I was pressed to hear him say that, for it enabled me to say, "That is exactly what you shall do if you believe in Jesus. You shall be born again." But if we could be born again as we were born at first, that is, of the will of the flesh, we should do as we did before—for that which is born of the flesh, if it could be born twice of flesh—would

be still flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit and, "You must be born again from above"—you must be born of the Spirit of God. What the Spirit of God does for us is to give us a new life to start us afresh with a new nature upon a new career. Whoever believes in Jesus is born again! Regeneration is a great mystery, but you have that mystery. Do not puzzle yourself about the new birth—you have experienced it if you really believe in the Lord Jesus. As I tried to explain it just now, you are born again. You are a new creature in Christ Jesus. You have begun life again. It is of little use to attempt to mend the old nature, it is too far gone. There was a certain prince who used to swear this oath, "God mend me!" But a good man says, "I think He had better make a new one."

Some men think God will mend them, but they err. I like the drunkard to become sober and the thief to become honest and mend himself as much as he can. But what he really wants is making over again. I have heard of a man who brought his gun to the gunsmith's to be repaired. "You want it repaired," says the smith. "Well, what it needs is a new stock, lock, and barrel." That looked very much like making a new one! You had better begin *de novo*. The old law had for its token the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the distinguishing ordinance of the new covenant goes much further. What does Christ say to His people in the act of baptism? He says, "You are dead. You must be buried and must rise into newness of life." Baptism cannot do this, but it sets forth our need of the death of the old nature and of resurrection into new life. We must be born again—not washed, not cleansed, not mended up—but made new creatures in Christ Jesus. And every man who believes in Jesus has undergone that wondrous change! He is not born of blood, that is, not born according to the natural way of birth. He is born in a new, celestial manner. He is not born of the will of the flesh—man's bad carnal will—nor of the will of man, man's best will, for the will of man, when it has done all it can, has done nothing at all savingly. If you were born of the will of man, it would not answer the purpose—"born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." We need renewal by a supernatural power. God alone can create and God alone can new-create. To make a new creature is a greater wonder than to make a world, because when God made a world there was nothing to stand in His way. But when He makes a new creature, there is the old creature in conflict with Him. If I may be allowed to commit so palpable an error of speech, I would say it takes double omnipotence to re-create! We must be born from above, but we are saved if we have believed in the Lord Jesus. God grant that if any here have not believed, the new birth may be given them—and faith in Christ Jesus.

IV. Now, lastly, lest I weary you, FAITH RAISES THE BELIEVER TO THE NOBLEST CONCEIVABLE CONDITION. The man who has received Christ has undergone a new birth which fits him to be a child of God. Now, note, first, the *inconceivable honor* of being a child of God. Ah, if all the degrees, dignities, honors, and titles that were ever conferred by men

could be put into a heap, they would not make enough of real honor to be seen by a microscope—compared with the glory that belongs to the humblest, poorest, and most despised son of God! Son of God! "Unto which of the angels did He say at any time, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You?" I know the text applies to Christ, but it applies, also, to all His people. His angels are servants—they are not sons. It is their delight to keep watch and ward about us, as servants do over young princes of the blood. "They shall bear You up in their hands, lest You dash your foot against a stone." About the child of God there is even, here, a splendor which is none the less bright because carnal eyes cannot see it. It is like the splendor of God—invisible because too excessive for eyes to see.

I will picture a child of God, if you please, a daughter of Zion. She is a poor seamstress. She has stitched a shroud as well as a shirt and she lies upstairs dying. You would not like to fare as she does. She dwells in a wretched little room. It is scantily furnished. The bed is hard and she lies there in agony. She can scarcely breathe. She gasps for life. She is very poor and those upon whom she is depending have begun to feel her a burden and sometimes say hard words to her. This is a gloomy place, is it not? Come here. I will touch your eyes as the prophet did the eyes of his servant. And what do you see? You see one of the members of Christ's body struggling for the last time—and about to win the victory. Listen to her! She tells you that Christ is with her! Do you see Him? There He stands in the deepest sympathy, bending over His beloved, smiling upon a soul that He has chosen from before the foundations of the world—a daughter upon whom He has put a garment without spot, meet for royal wear. She is a king's daughter. Look about the room. Angels are there, they are waiting all around her, waiting to take her home. The Holy Spirit, Himself, is within her soul. Do you see the light of His consolations and revelations? If your eyes are open, you can see it. Yes, the Father Himself is here, for He is never away from the deathbeds of His children! "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." She has grown worse. Her eyes are dim. Her voice is feeble. Listen to her! I am picturing no fancy scene—I have heard it! She is just about to enter into life, and she cries—

"And when you hear my heart-strings break,
How sweet my minutes roll!
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
But glory in my soul!"

If she has strength enough left, you will hear her sing—

"'Midst darkest shades, if He appears,
My dawning is begun;
He is my soul's bright morning star,
And He my rising sun."

Do not talk to me of Joan of Arc! This is the true heroine! She is battling with death and singing while she dies. Fear? She has long forgotten what that means. Doubt? It is banished! Distress? Despondency? She has left

them all behind. She is a believer! She has received Jesus and she has power to be a child of God! Oh, the honor and dignity of being born from above!

Now, note again the *safety* of this birth. If you are a child of God, how safe you are! I am sure there is no father and mother here that would let any harm come to their children. None of us would if we could protect them. Do you think God will suffer His children to be harmed? He will cover them with His feathers and under His wings shall they trust. His Truth shall be their shield and buckler. There shall no evil befall them—neither shall any plague come near their dwelling. "I, the Lord, do keep it. I will water it every moment lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them Me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand."—

"Safe in the arms of Jesus."

Well may you sing that, for so you are if you are the children of God!

And, last of all, though much more might be said, what *happiness* this brings to a man to know that he is a child of God. I remember, some 22 years ago, being waited upon by a Mormon who wanted to convince me of the divine mission of Joseph Smith. And after hearing some of his talk, I said, "Sir, would you kindly tell me what you have to offer me and how I am to get it? I will listen to you if you will let me tell you afterwards what I have to offer you and the way to it." I heard him with a great deal of patience. He listened to me not quite so patiently, but when I had done, he saluted me thus, "If what you say is true, you ought to be the happiest man in the world!" To which I replied, "Sir, you are correct. I ought to be and, more, I am!" And so I left him. And so I am, and so is every child of God that lives up to his privilege. You are a child of God—forgiven, accepted, beloved—what more do you need? In the name of goodness, what more do you need? If a man were to become an imperial prince, would he say, "I need more"? My dear man, what more can you need? If you are a son of God, what more can you ask? I remember the time—perhaps you remember it for yourself—when I was in bondage under sin and I thought I should be sent to hell. If the Lord had said to me, "I will forgive you, but you must live on bread and water till you die," I would have clapped my hands for joy! I would have said, "Lord, do but save me. If I can get rid of my sins, the very hardest lot will be a pleasure to me." Let us never complain, since we are possessors of salvation. The joy of the Lord is your strength. "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice."

Remember this as a practical word. There is an old French proverb which says, "Nobility obliges." There is an obligation upon nobles. You do not expect to see great princes sweeping the street crossing. You would not expect to hear of Her Majesty the Queen acting like a milkmaid. Well, now, if you are a son of God, you must act like it! If I hear of a man who

says, "I am a child of God," and he gives short weight and is hard in his bargains—I am ashamed of him! He, a son of God? He who must make money, and hold it, and keep it? He, a son of God? He is not very much like his Father! Son of God! And yet sharp, quick-tempered, angry, spiteful! He is not very much like his Father. A child of God and do a mean thing? My dear brethren, what are you? A son of God and tell a lie? A son of God and afraid of anybody? A son of God and cannot look your fellow man in the face without a blush? A son of God and at home a tyrant? Such conduct will never bear a thought—and he who is guilty of it gravely offends. When the great Emperor Napoleon was in his power, if a member of his family married below his rank, he was made to know the emperor's anger, for members of the imperial house were under bonds of honor to keep up their dignity. You girls here, who are daughters of God, dare you marry out of the imperial family? Never do that! Take care that you are not unequally yoked. When a king was taken prisoner, Alexander asked him how he would be treated, and he said, "Like a king."

Christian, act like a king! When a quarrelsome person offends us, we should say in our heart, "I would have quarreled with you, but I could not stoop to it. I am a child of God." I read a bitter remark of Guizot's to his enemies the other day, which ran something like this, "Come up the steps and mount as high as you can. And when you reach the top you will be beneath my contempt." So oftentimes may the child of God think of the world and all the shams, and all the temptations which are in it, "I have a great work. How can I come down to you? I am a son of God. My conversation is in heaven! I cannot leave my position to come down to you." Walk as children of light. "What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" You are "a peculiar people, a royal priesthood, a chosen generation, zealous for good works." Do not demean yourselves!

Go your way and may the Spirit of your Father rest upon you. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John 3.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—533, 448.

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FAITH AND THE WITNESS UPON WHICH IT IS FOUNDED
NO. 1213

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

"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He has witnessed of His Son. He that believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself: He that believes not God, has made Him a liar; because he believes not the witness that God witnessed of His Son." 1 John 5:9, 10.

YOU observe that I have somewhat corrected the translation. The same word is employed in every case in the original, but for the sake of variety of expression, the translators have used four different words in our version and so, instead of improving the sense, which, indeed, never can be in the case of the Holy Spirit's writing, they have rather darkened the meaning. Put the word, "witness," or, "testimony," in each case, and you get the true meaning.

Last Thursday night, I tried to show the great importance of faith and that, while it was a most simple thing, it was also most sublime. While it appeared to be weak, it was really the strongest of all motive principles, and produced the most amazing results. If, on this occasion I shall run in the same strain, for me, indeed, it will not be grievous, and for you, it will be safe, for we cannot too often review the truths which are the vitals of our holy religion. Faith stands, under the covenant of grace, in a leading position among the works of the regenerate man and the gifts of the Spirit of God.

Righteousness is no longer to him that works, but to the man that believes on Him that justifies the ungodly. The promise no longer stands to the man who does these things, that he shall live in them, else we were shut out of it, but, "The just shall live by faith." God now bids us live by believing in Him. He saw that we were not willing to yield obedience to Him and remained rebellious. Perceiving, with a glance, that the root of that rebellion lay in lack of love to Him and in need of confidence in Him, He now begins, at the very foundation of the whole matter, and by a wondrous act of grace, to claim our confidence. He gives us proof that He deserves it and then, comes to us and says, "Trust Me. Trust My Son, who has died for you, and you are reconciled to Me by His blood. Begin, then, the new life with confidence in Me as the mainspring of all your actions, and thus shall you be saved. If I threaten you, you will only revolt more and more. If I strike you, you will sooner die under the rod than repent. Nothing remains with which to influence you but love. And now, in the person of My Son, I commend My love to you and show you what

good intents I have towards you. Come and trust Me. Let us be friends again. Rely upon what I have worked, in the person of My Son, that you might be forgiven. Trust Him and you are saved."

Men are willing enough to accept a gospel which requires them to do something. They admire the impossible way of salvation by works. Man is afraid, when Sinai is altogether on a smoke, and begs that the terrible words of the law may not be spoken to him again. And yet he still loves to wander around the foot of Sinai and is unwilling to come unto Mount Zion. The old spirit of Hagar is upon us, and until the Lord causes us to be born again, we remain children of the bondwoman and will not rejoice in the promise. To accept the gift of free grace is contrary to our proud nature. The power of God is needed to induce us to throw down the tools with which we work for salvation and take, with joyful hands, the full, free, and finished salvation which Jesus bestows on all who trust Him. One would have thought this plan of trusting in Jesus for salvation would be joyfully accepted by all, but instead of that, no man receives the witness of God, though it is infallible.

I wish to speak, this evening, a little upon the grounds of testimony—*the reasons of faith*—and may God grant, while we speak about them, believers may be refreshed and unbelievers may be led to Jesus. First, in our text, we have *the external evidence* or the witness of God *to* us—"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He has witnessed of His Son." Then, secondly, we shall consider *the internal evidence* or the witness of God *in* us. "He that believes on the Son has the witness in himself." And then, thirdly, we shall *inquire how we are treating the witness of God*, especially dealing with those of whom we find it said, "He that believes not God, has made Him a liar, because he believes not the witness that God witnessed of His Son."

I. First, then, dear friends, since our great business is that we believe God, let us see what reason we have for believing Him. THE EXTERNAL EVIDENCE given is stated in the first verse of the text, as the evidence of God to us, and it is prefaced by the remark that, "*We receive the witness of men*." We are accustomed to receive the witness of men. David said, "All men are liars," but he spoke in haste. There would be no history if we did not receive the witness of men. If we neglected human evidence, there could be no courts of law, no trading between man and man except for cash money. Confidence would cease and the bands which unite the social fabric would be snapped. We do and must believe the testimony of men as a general rule—and it is only right that we should account witnesses honest till they have proven themselves false.

The principle may very readily be pushed too far, and we may take the witness of men and find ourselves deceived. Still, for all that, the evidence of honest men is weighty and, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses the whole shall be established." Now, God has been pleased to give us a measure of the witness of men with regard to His Son, Jesus Christ. We have the witness of such men as the four evangelists and the

12 apostles. These men saw Jesus Christ. Some of them were familiar with Him for years. They saw evidence of His deity, for they saw Him walk on water and heard Him say to the winds and the waves, "Peace, be still," and there was a great calm. These witnesses say that they saw Him heal lepers with a touch, open blind men's eyes, and even raise the dead.

Three of them tell us that they were on the mountain of transfiguration with Him and saw His glory, and heard a voice out of heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son: hear you Him." These persons were very unsophisticated individuals. They mostly belonged to a class of men who are rather celebrated for their bluff honesty, namely, fishermen. They certainly had nothing to gain by saying that they saw all these things—in fact, they had everything to lose. Their names are famous, now, but they could little have reckoned upon such fame. And they do not appear to have been men who cared about fame at all.

They lost their all. They were despised and maltreated, and most of them met with a cruel death on account of having borne witness to what they saw. Their witness is by no means of a doubtful character. They were very positive that they saw the things of which they are witnesses. One of them has said, "He that saw it bore record, and he knows that his witness is true, and he knows what he says true." No part of history has come down to us so well attested as the life of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, a man takes Tacitus, and he believes what Tacitus tells him, although, very likely, Tacitus did not see the things and only got them second hand. But as a reputable historian, his witness is received. Surely the witness of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and Peter and James and Paul is as good as the witness of Julius Caesar or Tacitus. And it is rendered the more trustworthy from the fact that they died for adhering to it—which neither Caesar nor Tacitus were made to do. Besides, for the gospel narrative we have many witnesses—the number of names was about 120—and they all agreed and stood fast. And even the one who did, for a time, seem to forsake his testimony, bad as he was, returned to it and threw down the money for which he had sold his Master and said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood."

We have the witness of men as to the facts that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived and died and rose again and ascended into heaven. Further, we have the testimony of men as to the present power of that same Jesus to forgive men their trespasses and to save them from the power of sin. From the first day when our Lord was taken up till now, men and women have come forward and have said, "We were once lovers of sin. Whatever our neighbors are, such were we, but we are washed. We are sanctified, and all this by faith in Jesus." Those who knew these people have confessed the change, although they have often been, at the same time, angry with them for it. They have acknowledged their virtues and have persecuted them on that account.

Now, these converted people have stood to it that they obtained a new heart and a right spirit through believing in Jesus. They have been put in

prison for saying this and for declaring that faith in the crucified Savior had delivered them from the dominion of sin, from despondency, and despair. That it had made them love God, given them hope and joy and peace, taught them to love their neighbors, to do justice and to expect a home in heaven. These people have been among the best in the world, all along, even as we read in history of the Albigenses and the Waldenses or the Vaudois or the Lollards. They are described as detestable fanatics and enthusiasts, but they are admitted to have been sober, honest, chaste, quiet citizens and industrious parents—so that the very kings who put them to death regretted that it was necessary to sacrifice such subjects.

Now, it is a very singular thing that these people should so constantly and continuously come forward and say, "The witness of God is true. He has sent His Son into the world and those that believe on Him are saved. We are saved and we will burn at Smithfield, rot in the Lollards' tower, or lie in a dungeon till the moss grows on our eyelids—but we will never deny or cease to assert this gospel." All ages have supplied the witness of men. Some of you, beloved friends, have had this witness in a very pointed and practical manner. I may be addressing one who is irreligious, but he never can forget his mother, or his sister, or some other beloved relative now gone to heaven. You are never able to laugh at religion, though you do not believe in it, because these sainted ones rise up before your mind.

You are persuaded that they were under a delusion, but, for all that, they were so happy that you half wish you were deluded, too. You would sooner put your children in a school with godly people than with skeptics like yourself—you know you would. There is a something about a Christian which is a witness to you. To me, I must confess, the witness of the lives of some Christians has been wonderfully confirmatory when I have seen how they suffer without repining and even bless the Lord in the midst of agony. If this is the essence of the Christian religion, it must be true. And so, on dying beds, when we have seen the remarkable peace and, sometimes, the extraordinary joy of persons departing, we have felt quite sure that faith in Jesus is no fiction.

I have heard dying children speak like doctors of divinity about the things of God. I have heard dying women, who were quite uneducated, speak of the world unseen in a style of inspiration which has struck me with awe. I do not believe that a faith which enables a man to die triumphantly, rejoicing in his God, or to die calmly in the midst of pain, looking for a world to come, can be, after all, a myth. Oh, if it were so, and the wise man could prove it was all a mistake, I would almost ask him to forego his work—for this has charmed away our fears and turned our desert life into a garden of the Lord. The gospel has smoothed the pillow of the dying and wiped the tears of the desponding. Alas, for you, oh earth, if this could be proven a dream, then were your sun quenched forever and it had been better for us all that we had never been born.

But it is not so. The witness of men about the things of God is very clear. Some years ago, there went into a Methodist class meeting, a lawyer who was a doubter, but at the same time a man of candid spirit. Sitting down on one of the benches, he listened to a certain number of poor people, his neighbors, whom he knew to be honest people. He heard some 13 or 14 of these persons speak about the power of divine grace in their souls, and about their conversion and so on. He jotted down the particulars and went home, sat down, and said to himself, "Now, these people all bear witness. I will weigh their evidence." It struck him that if he could get those 12 or 13 people into the witness box, to testify on his side in any question before a court, he could carry anything. They were persons of different degrees of intellect and education, but they were all of the sort of persons whom he would like to have for witnesses—persons who could bear cross-examination and by their very tone and manner would win the confidence of the jury. "Very well," he said to himself, "I am as much bound to believe these people about their religious experience as about anything else." He did so and that led to his believing on the Lord Jesus Christ with all his heart. Thus, you see, the testimony of God to us does, in a measure, come through men and we are bound to receive it.

But now comes the text—"If we receive the witness of men, *the witness of God is greater."* God is to be believed if all men contradict Him. "Let God be true and every man a liar." One word of God ought to sweep away 10,000 words of men, whether they are philosophers of today or sages of antiquity. God's word against them all, for He knows infallibly. Of His own Son, He knows as none else can. Of our condition before Him, He knows. Of the way to pardon us, He knows. There is nothing in God that could lead Him to err or make a mistake—and it were blasphemy to suppose that He would mislead us. It were an insult to Him, such as we may not venture to perpetrate for a moment, to suppose that He would willfully mislead His poor creatures by a proclamation of mercy which meant nothing, or by presenting to them a Christ who could not redeem them. The gospel, with God for its witness, cannot be false. Whatever may be the witness against it, the witness of God is greater. We must believe the witness of God. Now, what is the witness of God with regard to Christ? How does He prove to us that Jesus Christ did really come into the world to save us? He proves it in three ways according to the context of this passage. God's witnesses are three—*the Spirit*, the water, and the blood.

God says, "My Son did come into the world. He is My gift to sinful men. He has redeemed you and He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto Me by Him. And in proof that it is so, the Holy Spirit has been given. He descended at Pentecost. He abides with you forever. He has not gone back again. He is in the Word—He is with the Word. He is in the church—He is with the church." Whenever God the Holy Spirit is pleased to work, whether in revivals or by individual conversions, the wonderful phenomena which are worked by Him, which are miracles in the world of the mind, are as astonishing as the miracles of Christ in the

world of matter. God is saying, "I declare Christ to be My Son and your Savior, for I have sent the Holy Spirit to prove it. I have converted yonder sinner, I have comforted yonder saint, by the Holy Spirit. I have instructed the ignorant, I have sanctified the impure, I have guided My people safely by the Holy Spirit. He is My witness. If you need any evidence that Jesus is really My Son, behold My Spirit going forth among the sons of men, converting whom He wills by the truth concerning Jesus."

Then *the water*, that is to say, the purifying power of the gospel is also God's witness to the truth of the gospel. If it does not change men's characters when they receive it, it is not true. If it does not purify and produce virtue and holiness, do not believe it. But as God everywhere—among the most savage tribes or among the most refined of mankind—makes the gospel to be sacred, it has the power of cleansing the hearts and lives of men. He gives another witness that His Son is really divine and that His gospel is true—*the blood* also witnesses. Does believing in Jesus Christ do what the blood was said to do, namely, give peace with God through the pardon of sin? Does it, or not?

Hundreds of thousands all over the world affirm that they had no peace of conscience till they looked to the streaming veins of Jesus—and then they saw how God can be just and yet forgive sin. Wherever God gives peace through the blood, that blood witnesses with the Spirit and the water on God's behalf. He says to us sinners, "I have spoken to you a word of love, and that word is My Son. What I have said to you is Jesus. He is My communication to men. I have delivered Him as My message to your souls. And in proof that He is my message to you—a message of love and mercy and pardon—behold, I send the Holy Spirit forth among the sons of men. Behold, I work a purifying work among the sons of men and I give peace in the heart through the blood of the atonement. These three, agreeing in one, are My witness concerning My Son."

Now, dear brethren, remember that the evidence of faith to every soul hangs here. I shall soon speak to you of the witness in you, but the faith demanded of men rests not upon the ground of any witness *in* them, but of the witness *to* them. I am to believe God because He cannot lie. I am to believe Christ because God gives me the witness concerning Christ. And if I will not do so I shall have no other witness. The inward evidence only comes to those who, first of all, accept the evidence of God. Witness *in* us is not given first, but witness *to* us—and if the evidence to us is rejected, we shall be cast away and lost forever.

II. I come now TO THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE, or the witness *in* us. "He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in Himself." When a man is led by the Spirit of God to believe that God cannot lie, he inquires what it is that God says. And he hears that atonement has been made and that whoever believes in Jesus shall have eternal life. He sees the witness to be good and he believes it. That man is saved. What happens next? Why, this man becomes a new creature. Old things have passed away. He loves what he hated and hates what he loved. He believes what

he denied and disbelieves what he formerly accepted. He is radically changed.

"Now," says he to himself, "I am sure of the truth of the gospel, for this change, this wonderful change in me, in my heart, my speech and my life, must be of divine origin. I was told that if I believed I should be saved from my former self, and I am. I know not only by the external witness, nor even because of the witness of God, but I have an inner consciousness of a most marvelous birth and this is a witness in myself." The man then goes on to enjoy great peace. Looking alone to Jesus Christ for pardon, he finds his sins taken from him and his heart is unburdened of a load of fear. And this rest of heart becomes to him another inward witness.

To be forgiven makes his very soul dance for joy and he cries, "Now I know that Christ's blood can wash away sin, because mine has gone." Oh, believe me, if you were ever reduced to despair under a sense of sin. If you were ever dragged through a thorn hedge, laid by the feet in the stocks of conviction and beaten with the great ten-thonged whip of the law till there was not a sound place on you and you were utterly ready to die—if Jesus then came to you and said, "Be of good comfort, your sins are forgiven you"—you knew that it was so and doubted His existence no more. From that moment, you learned to say, "I once hated the testimony of Matthew and Mark, and Luke, and John, and Paul, but I do not now. I believe and am sure, for I have felt it myself, and know it in my soul."

Perhaps a skeptical neighbor will sneeringly say, "It is fanaticism." Yes, but you will feel just like a man who went to the Ophthalmic Hospital as blind as a bat and came out able to see clearly—and somebody said it was fanaticism and he said—"Well, I do not know what that hard word means, but one thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." It is a wonderfully hard thing to drive a man out of his consciousness. "Prove that you are alive," said somebody, and the man who was asked for the proof walked across the room. Instead of a syllogism, he gave a fact. So does the joy and peace, which the Lord gives to His people from Himself, become to them the very best evidence of the power of the precious blood and of the divine mission of Jesus.

As the Christian thus goes on from strength to strength, he meets with answers to prayer. He goes to God in trouble, tells the Lord about it, and he gets out of his trouble, or he is enabled to bear it and to see it all works for his good. In great perplexity, he hastens to the Lord—light comes and he sees his way through it. He needs many favors. He asks for them and they are bestowed. He does not need Elijah to come and say, "God hears prayer, for He answered my cries on Carmel and sent rain." He wants no Old Testament saint to declare to him that God answers His people's requests. He is glad of their testimony, but he has the witness in himself.

I sometimes hear of even professed ministers of Christ who have doubts about these things. I should like to ask them a question or two. I should not inquire as to what they believe or do not believe, but I should

begin thus—"Do you know Jesus Christ in your own soul? Were you ever converted? Do you feel the power of the Holy Spirit resting upon you?" If I came to close questioning with some of these skeptical gentlemen, I guarantee you they would soon take themselves off to some other company. I do not believe in this modern doubting—I have no faith in its honesty and no belief in its depth. The most foolish men I know of take up with it just as small boys like to wear men's clothes.

But when a man knows anything about God by fellowship and has really experienced these things, doubts and fears may flit across his soul—just as the migratory birds in the end of autumn may be heard flying overhead in the air—but they will not alight on his soul to rest. Infidel theories find no dwelling place in a soul that is really born unto God and has daily and continual dealings with Him. A man does not doubt things that are an integral part of his daily existence. Very few skepticisms arise in a man's mind about the facts of pain and pleasure, or the phenomena of hunger and thirst. So, when it comes to living and feeding upon Christ, practical experience soon puts an end to questions. "He that believes has the witness in himself."

Oh, brethren, the Lord gives to His people answers to prayer. And he gives them such a sense of nearness to Himself and sometimes such overpowering joys in His presence, or such an overwhelming sense of awe when He comes near to them, that they believe and are sure that it is even so. "He that believes has the witness in himself" and there is no witness like it. Expect the witness of God, which stands first, and which we are to receive or perish—there is nothing equal to the witness within yourself. Somebody wants to prove to me that sugar is sweet. My dear sir, you may spare yourself the trouble. I had some in my tea, just now, and I am quite sure about it.

He wants to prove to me that seawater is salty. Sir, I do not question it, I have tasted it quite often enough to have no doubt about it. Things of religion must be tasted to be proved—"O, *taste* and see that the Lord is good." First believe the gospel to be true, because of the witness of God. And if, having so believed, you would be deepened and strengthened in faith, go on to enjoy the blessings of divine grace and you will grow in faith. Christian people, I ask you this question and I know your answer—If you ever doubt about the truthfulness of God, is it not when your piety is in a low condition? If you have neglected prayer, if you have lost fellowship with Jesus, if you have dropped out of accord with God, is it not then that you are plagued with questions?

But if we walk in the light, as God is in the light, and abide in Him whom we have received, is it not true that though we may be quite unable to meet, in the ways of logic, the objections that are raised, there is a something within, an inward indisputable assurance, which is not shaken and cannot be? It is said of a Roman Catholic priest that he took away the New Testament from a child on one occasion, but the child's teacher had taught the boy 12 chapters of the gospel according to John, and so

he said to the priest, "But you cannot take it all away, sir." "Why not?" "Because I have learned 12 chapters by heart."

Now, if the critics begin tearing away at our precious Book—though I would not let them have a verse of it—yet if they could obliterate some of its promises, they could not tear it all away because we have it in our hearts. We *know* it is true. Many a poor man and woman could illuminate their Bibles after the fashion of the tried saint who placed a, "T and P," in the margin. She was asked what it meant and replied, "That means, 'Tried and proved,' sir." Yes, we have tried and proved the Word of God and are sure of its truth.

III. I have shown you that the gospel is proclaimed to men and they are expected to believe it—not upon the ground of any witness that is in them, but because of the witness of God to them. And I have also shown that the witness in them follows in due course as a reward of faith rather than a ground of faith. But here is the practical point—HOW ARE WE TREATING THE WITNESS OF GOD? For it is written in our text, "He that believes not God, has made Him a liar; because he believes not the witness that God witnessed of His Son."

Now, are we believing the witness of God? I believe that the most of you here present entertain no doubt whatever that the Bible is the Word of God. Do not, therefore, I pray you, think it superfluous for me to ask you. Do you believe it? Do you believe it? You reply, "Of course, I do." Well, I am not sure that it is, "Of course," because there are persons who believe in a way—and that way is a false one. I have heard of a poor curate who was upbraided for not believing the articles of his church and replied that he believed at the rate of 40 pounds a year.

There are persons who believe at a very cheap rate. They believe in the Westminster Assembly's catechism—it is true they never read it—but they believe it. The church has a creed—they do not know what it is—but they still say they believe it. They believe what the church believes. "But what does the church believe?" "It believes what I believe." "And what do you and the church believe?" "We both believe the same thing." That is what it comes to. Such a faith will not save your soul. There must be an intelligent reception of the testimony which God has given. There are many in whom this faith does not exist, because if it did, they could not act as they do.

Do you unconverted people believe that the wrath of God abides on you? Then you must be insane if you do not seek to escape from that wrath. If you believed that at this moment there was a snake in your pew, I guarantee you, you would soon rush out into the aisle. I should not need to argue with you about it either. I might try to persuade you to sit still, but you would not be persuaded. If you really believed that your sins had destroyed you, you could not be careless any longer. Do you believe that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners and that He is able to save you? Yes, you are sure you do.

I am not so sure, because if it were certain that there was outside yonder door a purse of gold worth 50,000 pounds, and that whoever

chose to take it should have it, *you would be glad to hear me pronounce the benediction*, the most devout of you, so that you might get the treasure. You would not need any exhorting to go, for natural instincts would lead you to make haste and seize the golden opportunity. If you believe that Jesus Christ saves from sin and gives to the soul a treasure far beyond all price, you should make all speed to obtain the precious gift. Is it not so? He who believes in the value of a gift will hasten to accept it, unless he is out of his mind.

Many of you who think you believe, and say you believe, do not believe at all. And I put it to you, do you know what you are doing? You are calling God a liar. So the text says. "No, I would not do that," says one. Friend, I hope that your case is well described in that prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." But after to-night, you will know what you do. If you do not believe what God says, you call Him a liar. "I do not see that," says one. You cannot help seeing it if you will but look at it, for if any person bears witness to you concerning some important matter and you say, "I do not believe you," you call that person a liar.

When God bears witness in any way, He ought to be believed. To deny the truth of God is a fearful insult to Him. To every man, and to every good man especially, his truthfulness is a jewel. He cannot endure to have his truth impugned, and do you think that God can? The more pure a man is, the more indignant he is when his truthfulness is assailed. And to doubt God is to assail a truthfulness which is unimpeachable and ought never to be questioned. Besides, look at the whole case. You have quarreled with God. You have broken His law. You have sinned. You deserve to be cast into hell. And yet, in His mercy, He says, "Sinner, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but would rather that he should turn unto Me and live. And in order that I may be able to forgive you and yet be Judge of all the earth, I have given My own Son to bleed and die on Calvary, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. Come," He says, "sinner, trust in My Son, and I will forgive you."

And your answer is, "I do not believe You." Now that is, in addition to the insult of unbelief, exceedingly provoking to the loving heart of God. I have met with persons who have been generous to the poor until the murmuring words of some whom they have tried to benefit have quite wearied them from their benevolent course. Most persons who are doing generous actions are very sorely hurt if their conduct is misrepresented and their kindness treated with ingratitude. Now, when so splendid an act of generosity, so unparalleled a deed of grace as the gift of His own Son is made a subject of undeserved unbelief, it touches God in a very tender place. I am not using too strong language when I remind you that He whom He gave to us was His own Son, very dear to Him, and yet He put Him to grief on our account.

The bloody sweat of Gethsemane and the wounds of Calvary show how greatly God pressed and bruised that matchless cluster—His own Son.

And, after all that, for you to say, "No, I do not believe in Jesus. I will not have His atonement and I will not trust in Him," is cruel of you, sinner. It is cruel of you to the last degree. To stand at Calvary's cross and see Him bleed, whose unspeakable beauties might put the very sun to blush for the dimness of His light—to see Him die for His enemies and to hear Him say, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and then to turn your back on Him? This is the direst proof of the depravity of human nature that ever was presented under heaven.

All the iniquities and transgressions that are committed by men, all the crimes that have ever stained humanity do not equal, in extent of enmity to God, the hatred that lurks in the resolve sooner to be damned than owe salvation to the free grace of God. He hates God, indeed, who hates Him so much that he will even dwell forever in hell sooner than be forgiven by Him and saved through the blood of His Son. Man shows his deadly enmity against God to the fullest extent when he will destroy himself to indulge it. I think I hear one say, "I would believe if I felt something in my heart." You will never feel that something. You are required to *believe* on the witness of God—and will you dare to say that His evidence is not sufficient?

If you will believe on the divine testimony, you shall have the witness within, by-and-by, but you cannot have that first. The demand of the gospel is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and believe upon God's testimony." What more testimony do you need? God has given it to you in many forms. By holy men who have gone before, as I have told you. By His inspired Bible; by the various works of His Spirit, and by the water and the blood in the church all around you. Above all, Jesus Himself is the best of witnesses. Believe *Him*. "But I wish I could have a very striking dream—perhaps that would convert me." Would you put more confidence in a dream than in God's Word? "Oh, but I hear of persons who have received revelations from the Spirit of God." Do not tell me about the Spirit of God speaking to anybody more than is in the Bible. What is in the Scriptures, the Spirit of God will apply to the heart. But if you need the Spirit of God to speak to you over and above that, you will never have it. You have Moses and the prophets—hear them—and if you do not, neither will you be converted though one rose from the dead. But nobody will rise from the dead. You have, upon the strength of the divine testimony, to trust your soul in the hands of Jesus—and if you do so you shall be saved. May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so at this very moment.

"That is an easy matter," says one. I know it is, and that is why it is so hard. If it were a hard thing, you would do it, or try to do it. But because it is so easy, your pride will not come down to it unless my Master moves you to consent. It is simply, "Wash and be clean." "Believe and live, trust and find it true." Ah, may the Lord grant that this simple matter may be clear to you—that you may accept it eagerly, lay hold upon it earnestly—

and then, having believed, you shall have the witness in yourself which will prove it to be true.

"Doctor," you say, "will your medicine heal me?" "Yes," he says. "But doctor," you say, "I cannot believe till I have the witness in myself that it will make me well." "But," he says, "you won't be able to take my medicine on those terms because you cannot have that witness till you have taken it. Will you have it on my witness that I have prescribed this in many similar cases and I know, from what I understand of the anatomy of the body, that the drugs suit your disease and will remove it?" "No, doctor," says the man, "I must feel better before I can have confidence in you." "What? Feel the power of the medicine before you take it?" "Yes." "Then your demand is preposterous. You must surely be weak in your intellect."

Moved by this reproof, you take the medicine. He comes the next day and you feel relieved from the pain. A new tone is given to your system and you cheerfully exclaim, "Now, doctor, I have the witness in myself." But, if you had been foolish enough to insist and not take the medicine till you had proved it—and yet you could not prove it till you took it—you would have behaved like an idiot. And the man who will not take God at His Word, but needs something else besides the Lord's witness, not only insults God, but plays the part of an insane suicide and deserves to perish. God give you grace to accept the gospel. Then you shall have the witness in yourself and He shall have the praise, and you shall have the comfort.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John 5.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—531, 486.

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

"I will not fail you, nor forsake you."
Joshua 1:5.

NO doubt God had spoken to Joshua before. He had been a man of faith for many years and his faith enabled him to distinguish himself by such simple truthfulness of character and thoroughly faithful obedience to the Lord's will, that he and another were the only two left of the whole generation that came up out of Egypt. "Faithful among the faithless found," he survived where all else died. Standing erect in full vigor, he might have been compared to a lone tree which spreads its verdant branches untouched by the axe which has leveled its fellows with the ground.

But now, Joshua was about to enter upon a new work—he had become king in Jeshurun instead of Moses! From a servant, he had risen to be a ruler, and it now fell to his lot to lead the people across the Jordan and marshal their forces for the conquest of the promised land. On the threshold of this high enterprise, the Lord appears to His servant and says, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you: I will not fail you, nor forsake you." When God's people come into fresh positions, they shall have fresh revelations of His love! New dangers will bring new protections—new difficulties, new helps. New discouragements, new comforts, so that we may rejoice in tribulations, also, because they are so many newly-opened doors of God's mercy to us!

We will be glad of our extremities because they are divine opportunities. What the Lord said to Joshua was particularly encouraging and it came precisely when he needed it. Great was his peril and great was the promise—"Be not afraid, neither be you dismayed: for the Lord your God is with you where ever you go." We will waste no time in preface, but at once consider the divine promise. "I will not fail you, nor forsake you."

I. Observe here, first, THE SUITABILITY OF THE CONSOLATION WHICH THESE WORDS GAVE TO JOSHUA. "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." This must have been very cheering to him *in reference to himself*. He knew Moses and he must have had a very high esteem of him. He was a great man, one of a thousand—scarcely among all that have been born of woman has there arisen a greater than Moses. Joshua had been his servant and no doubt, considered himself to be very inferior to that great lawgiver.

A sense of his own weakness comes over a man all the more from being associated with a grander mind. If you mingle with your inferiors, you

are apt to grow vain—but closely associated with superior minds, there is a far greater probability that you will become depressed and may think even less of yourself than humility might require—for humility is, after all, only a right estimate of our own powers. Joshua, therefore, may possibly have been somewhat despondent under a very pressing sense of his own deficiencies, and this cheering assurance would meet his case—"I will not fail you: though you are less wise, or meek, or courageous than Moses, *I* will not fail you, nor forsake you."

If God is with our weakness, it waxes strong. If He is with our folly, it rises into wisdom. If He is with our timidity, it gathers courage. It matters not how conscious a man may be of being nothing at all in himself, when he is conscious of the divine presence, he even rejoices in his infirmity because the power of God rests upon him. If the Lord says unto the weakest man or woman here, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you," no cowardly thought will cross that ennobled spirit! That word will nerve the trembler with a lion-like courage which no adversary will be able to daunt.

The consolation given to Joshua would be exceedingly suitable *in the presence of his enemies*. He had spied out the land and he knew it to be inhabited by giant races, men famous both for stature and strength. The sons of Anak were there and other tribes described as "great, and many, and tall." He knew that they were a warlike people and expert in the use of destructive implements of war, such as brought terror upon men, for they had chariots of iron. He knew, too, that their cities were of colossal dimensions—fortresses whose stones at this very day surprise the traveler, so that he asks what wondrous skill could have lifted those masses of rock into their places.

The other spies had said that these Canaanites dwelt in cities that were walled up to heaven and though Joshua did not endorse that exaggeration, he was very well aware that the cities to be captured were fortresses of great strength. And he knew the people to be exterminated were men of ferocious courage and great physical energy. Therefore, the Lord said, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." What more was needed? Surely, in the presence of God, Anakim become dwarfs, strongholds become as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, and chariots of iron are as thistle-down upon the hillside driven before the blast!

What is strong against the Most High? What is formidable in opposition to Jehovah? "If God is for us; who can be against us?" They that are with us are more than they that are against us, when once the Lord of Hosts is seen in our ranks! "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Though a host should encamp against us, our hearts shall not fear! Though war should rise against us, in this will we be confident. This consolation, too, was *sufficient for all supplies*. Perhaps Joshua knew that the manna was no longer to fall. In the wilderness the supply of heavenly bread was continuous, but when they crossed the Jordan, they must quarter on the enemy.

And with the myriads of people that were under Joshua's command, the matter of providing for them must have been no trifle. According to some computations, nearly three million people came up out of Egypt—I scarcely credit the computation and am inclined to believe that the whole matter of the numbers of the Old Testament is not yet understood. I believe a better knowledge of the Hebrew tongue will lead to the discovery that the figures have been frequently misunderstood. But, still, a very large number of people came with Joshua to the edge of the wilderness and crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan.

Who was to provide for all these hungry bands? Joshua might have said, "Shall all the flocks and the herds be slain for this great multitude? And will the sea yield up her fish when the manna ceases? How shall these people be fed?" "I will not fail you, nor forsake you" was an answer which would meet all the demands of the commissariat! They might eat to the full, for God would find them food! Their clothes might wax old upon them, now that the miracle of the wilderness would cease, but new garments would be found for them in the wardrobes of their enemies. When the Lord opens all His granaries, none shall lack for bread. And when He unlocks His wardrobes, none shall go bare! So there was no room for anxiety in Joshua's mind. As for himself, if weak, this made him strong! As for his enemies, if they were powerful, this promise made him stronger than they! And as for the needs of Israel, if they were great, this promise supplied them all!

Surely this word must often have brought charming consolation to the heart of the son of Nun *when he saw the people failing him*. There was only the venerable Caleb left, of all his comrades with whom he had shared the 40 years' march through the great and terrible wilderness. Caleb and he were the last two sheaves of the great harvest—and they were both like shocks of corn fully ripe for the garner. Old men grow lonely and small wonder is it if they do. I have heard them say that they live in a world where they are not known, now that, one by one, all their old friends are gone home and they are left alone—like the last swallow of autumn when all its fellows have sought a sunnier climate. Yet the Lord says, "I will not forsake you. I shall not die. I am ever with you. Your Friend in heaven will live on as long as you do."

As for the generation which had sprung up around Joshua, they were very little better than their fathers. They turned back in the day of battle, even the children of Ephraim, when they were armed and carried bows. They were very apt to go aside into the most provoking sin. Joshua had as hard a task with them as Moses had—and it was enough to break the heart of Moses to have to deal with them. The Lord seems to bid him put no confidence in them, neither to be discomfited if they should be false and treacherous—"I will not fail you: *they* may, but *I* will not. I will not forsake you. They may prove cowards and traitors, but I will not desert you."

Oh, what an evil thing it is in a false and fickle world, where he that eats bread with us lifts up his heel against us! Where the favorite counselor becomes an Ahithophel and turns his wisdom into crafty hate! But

we know that, "There is a friend that sticks closer than a brother," One who is faithful and gives us sure tokens of a love which many waters cannot quench! I might dwell upon this point and show that the consolatory promise has as many facets as a well-cut diamond, each one reflecting the light of divine consolation upon the eye of Joshua's faith—but we will come to other matters.

II. Secondly, AT WHAT TIMES MAY WE CONSIDER THIS PROMISE TO BE SPOKEN TO OURSELVES? It is all very well to listen to it, as spoken to Joshua, but, O God, if You would speak thus to *us*, how consoled would we be! Do You ever do so? May *we* be so bold as to believe that You thus comfort *us?* Beloved, the whole run of Scripture speaks to the same effect to men of like mind with Joshua. No Scripture is of private interpretation! No text has spent itself upon the person who first received it. God's comforts are like wells which no one man or set of men can drain dry, however mighty may be their thirst!

A well may be opened for Hagar, but that well is never closed, and any other wanderer may drink at it. The fountain of our text first gushed forth to refresh Joshua, but if we are in Joshua's position and are of his character, we may bring our water pots and fill them to the brim! Let me mention *when* I think we may safely feel that God says to us, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." Surely it is when we are *called to do God's work*. Joshua's work was the Lord's work. It was God who had given the country to the people and who had said, "I will drive out the Canaanite from before you," and Joshua was God's executioner—the sword in the hand of the Lord for the driving out of the condemned races.

He was not entering upon a quixotic engagement of his own choosing and devising. He had not elected himself and selected his own work, but God had called him to it, put him in the office, and bid him do it! And therefore, He said to him, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." Brother, are you serving God? Do you live to win souls? Is it your grand object to be the instrument in God's hand of accomplishing His purposes of grace to the fallen sons of men? Do you know that God has put you where you are and called you to do the work to which your life is dedicated? Then, go on in God's name, for, as surely as He called you to His work, you may be sure that to you, also, He says, as indeed to all His servants, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you."

But I hear some of you say, "We are not engaged in work of such a kind that we could precisely call it 'work for God.'" Well, brethren, but are you *engaged in a work which you endeavor to perform to God's glory*? Is your ordinary and common trade one which is lawful—one concerning which you have no doubt as to its honest propriety—and in carrying it on do you follow only right principles? Do you endeavor to glorify God in the shop? Do you make the bells on the horses holiness to the Lord? It would not be possible for all of us men to be preachers, for where would be the hearers? Many would be very much out of place if he were to leave his ordinary calling and devote himself to what is so unscripturally called, "the ministry." The fact is, the truest religious life is that in which a man follows the ordinary calling of life in the spirit of a Christian.

Now, are you doing so? If so, you are as much ministering before God in measuring out yards of calico, or weighing pounds of tea, as Joshua was in slaying Hivites, Jebusites, and Hittites! You are as much serving God in looking after your own children and training them up in God's fear, and minding the house and making your household a church for God, as you would be if you had been called to lead an army to battle for the Lord of hosts! And you may take this promise for yourself, for the path of duty is the path where this promise is to be enjoyed. "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." Now, mark you, if you are living for *yourself*—if you are living for *gain*—if selfishness is the object of life, or if you are pursuing an unhallowed calling. If there is anything about your mode of business which is contrary to the mind and will of God and sound doctrine, you cannot expect God to aid you in sin, nor will He do it.

Neither can you ask Him to pander to your lusts, and to assist you in the gratification of your own selfishness. But if you can truly say, "I live to the glory of God and the ordinary life that I lead I desire to consecrate entirely to His glory," then you may take this promise home to yourself, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." But, mark you, there is another matter. We must, if we are to have this promise, *take God into our calculations*. A great many persons go about their supposed lifework without even *thinking* about God. I have heard of one who said everybody had left him, and someone said, "But surely, as a Christian, God has not failed you?" "Oh," he said, "I forgot God."

I am afraid there are many who call themselves Christians and yet forget God in common life. Among all the forces that a man calculates upon when he engages in an enterprise, he should never omit the chief force—but often it is so with us. We inquire, "Am I competent for such a work? I ought to undertake it, but am I competent?" And straightway, there is a calculation made of *competency*. And in these calculations, there is no item put down, "Item: The promise of a living God. Item: The guidance of the Spirit."

These are left out of the calculation! Remember that if you willfully omit them, you cannot expect to enjoy them! You must walk by *faith* if you are to enjoy the privileges of the faithful. "The just shall live by faith," and if you begin to live by *sense*, you shall join the weeping and the wailing of those who have gone to broken cisterns and have found them empty. And your lips shall be parched with thirst because you have forgotten the fountain of living waters to which you should have gone. Do you, brethren, habitually take God into your calculations? Do you calculate upon omniscient direction and omnipotent aid?

I have heard of a certain captain who had led his troops into a very difficult position and he knew that on the morrow he should need them all to be full of courage. And so, disguising himself, at nightfall he went round their tents and listened to their conversations until he heard one of them say, "Our captain is a very great warrior, and has won many victories. But he has this time made a mistake, for look, there are thousands of the enemy, and he has only so many infantry, so many cavalry, and so many guns." The soldier made out the account, and was about to

sum up the scanty total when the captain, unable to bear it any longer, threw aside the curtain of the tent and said, "And how many do you count *me* for, sir?"—as much as to say, "I have won so many battles that you ought to know that my skill can multiply battalions by handling them."

And so the Lord hears His servants estimating how feeble they are, and how little they can do, and how few are their helpers—and I think I hear Him rebukingly say, "But how many do you count your God for? Is He never to come into your estimate? You talk of providing and forget the God of providence! You talk of working, but forget the God who "works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure." How often in our enterprises have prudent people plucked us by the sleeve and said we have gone too far? Could we reckon upon being able to carry out what we had undertaken? No, we could *not* reckon upon it, except that we believe in God—and with God all things are possible! If it is *His* work, we may venture far beyond the shallowness of prudence into the great deeps of divine confidence, for God, who warrants our faith, will honor it before long!

O, Christian, if you can venture and feel it to be no venture, then may you grasp the promise, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you"! When you are on your *own* feet, you may dash against a stone! When you are running in your *own* strength, you may faint! But, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. And they shall walk and not faint." Now, remember, that we may take this promise when we are engaged in God's work, or when we turn our ordinary business *into* God's work, and when we do really, by faith, take God into our calculations!

But *we must also be careful that we walk in God's ways*. Observe that the next verse to the text runs thus, "Be strong, and of a good courage," and then the 7th verse is a singular one, "Only be you strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses, My servant commanded you: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper where ever you go." "Be strong and very courageous." What for? To obey! Does it need courage and strength to *obey?* Why, nowadays, that man is thought to be courageous who will have *no* laws of God to bind him! And he is thought to be strong-minded who ridicules revelation! But let us rest assured that he is truly strong of mind and heart who is content to be thought a fool and sticks to the good old truths of God and keeps the good old way.

There are enough, nowadays, of "intellectual" preachers. Some of us may be excused from this vaunted intellectualism that we may preach the simple gospel. There are enough who can becloud theology with the chill fogs of "modern thought." We are satisfied to let the Word speak for itself without misting it with our thinking. I believe it needs more courage and strength of mind to keep to the old things than to follow after novel and airy speculations. We must not expect the God of truth to be with us if we go away from God and His truth. Be careful how you dive. To watch every putting down of your foot is a good thing. Be exact and precise as

to the divine rule—careless about man's opinion and even defying it in which it is error. But be dutiful to God's law, bowing before it, yielding your whole nature in cheerful subservience to every command of the Most High. He that walks uprightly, walks surely—and to him is the promise, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you."

Begin your life-course with a policy of your own and you may get through it how you can. Be wise in your own conceit and trust to your own judgment—and the promotion of fools will be your reward! But be simple enough to do only God's will—to leave consequences and to follow the truth of God—and integrity and uprightness will preserve you. Go on doing right at all costs and the right will repay you all it costs you—and the righteous Lord will be true to His Word—"I will not fail you, nor forsake you." These, then, I think, are the conditions under which any believing man or woman may take to themselves the words of our text.

III. But now, thirdly, let us consider WHAT THIS PROMISE DOES NOT PRECLUDE. "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." We must not misunderstand this gracious word, lest we be disappointed when things happen contrary to our expectations. *This promise does not exclude effort.* A great many mistakes are made about the promises of God. Some think that if God is to be with them, they will have nothing to do. Joshua did not find it so. He and his troops had to slay every Amorite, Hittite, and Hivite that fell in battle. He had to fight and use his sword just as much as if there had been no God at all!

The best and the wisest thing in the world is to work as if it all depended upon *you*—and then trust in God, knowing that it all depends upon Him! He will not fail us, but we are not, therefore, to fold our arms and sit still. He will not forsake us, but we are not, therefore, to go upstairs to bed and expect that our daily bread will drop into our mouths. I have known idle people who have said, "Jehovah-Jireh," and sat with their feet on their desks and their arms folded, and have been lazy and self-indulgent. And generally, their presumption has ended in this—God has provided them rags and jags, and a place in the county jail before long! I think these are the very best provisions that can be made for idle people, and the sooner they get it, the better for society!

Oh no, no, no, no! God does not pander to our laziness! And any man who expects to get on in this world with anything that is good, without work, is a fool! Throw your whole soul into the service of God and then you will get God's blessing if you are resting upon Him. Even Mohammad could appreciate this! When one of his followers said, "I will turn my camel loose and trust in providence," Mohammed said, "No, no! Tie him up as tightly as you can and then trust in providence." Oliver Cromwell had a commonsense view of this truth of God, too. "Trust in God," he said, as they went to battle, "but keep your powder dry."

And so must we. I do not believe that God would have His servants act like fools! The best judgment a man has should be employed in the service of God. Common sense is, perhaps, as rare a thing among Christian people as salmon in the Thames. The devil's servants have more wisdom in their generation than the children of light have, but it ought not to be.

If you want to succeed, use every faulty you have, and put forth all your strength—and if it is a right cause, you may then fall back on the promise—"I will not fail you, nor forsake you." *Neither does this promise preclude occasional disaster*. After Joshua had received this promise, he went up to Ai and suffered a terrible defeat because the regulations of the war had been violated.

They had defrauded the Lord of a part of the spoil of Jericho, which was hidden in Achan's tent, and this troubled Israel. Yes, and without the violation of any law, the best man in the world must expect, in the most successful enterprise, that there will be some discouragements. Look at the sea—it is rolling in, it will rise to full tide before long—but every wave that comes up dies upon the shore! And after two or three great waves which seem to capture the pebbles, there comes a feebler one which sucks back. Very well, but the sea will win and reach its fullness. So in every good work for God, there is a drawing back every now and then; in fact, God often makes His servants go back that they may have all the more room to run and take a bigger leap than they could have taken from the place where they stood before.

Defeats in the hand of faith are only preparations for victory. If we are beaten for a little while, we grind our swords sharper and the next time, we take more care that our enemies shall know how keen they are. Do not, therefore, let any temporary disappointments dismay you—they are incidental to humanity and necessary parts of our education. Go on. God will certainly test you, but He will not fail you, nor forsake you. *Nor, again, does this promise preclude frequent tribulations and testing of faith.* In the autobiography of the famous Franck of Halle, who built and in the hands of God, provided for the orphan house of Halle, he says, "I thought when I committed myself and my work to God by faith, that I had only to pray when I had need, and that the supplies would come. But I found that I had sometimes to wait and pray for a long time."

The supplies did come, but not at once. The pinch never went so far as absolute want—but there were intervals of severe pressure. There was nothing to spare. Every spoonful of meal had to be scraped from the bottom of the barrel and every drop of oil that oozed out seemed as if it might be the last—but still it never did come to the last drop—and there was always just a little meal left. Bread shall be given us, but not always in 4-pound loaves. Our water shall be sure, but not always a brook full—it may only come in small cups. God has not promised to take any of you to heaven without trying your faith! He will not fail you, but He will bring you very low. He will not forsake you, but He will test you and prove you. You will frequently need all your faith to keep your spirits up—and unless God enables you to trust without staggering—you will find yourself sorely disquieted at times.

Now, are any of you brought to the verge of famine in God's work? It is a state in which I have often been—thank God, very often—and I have always been delivered and therefore, I can, from experience, say the Lord is to be trusted and He will not allow the faithful to be confused. He has said it and He will perform it—"I will not fail you, nor forsake you." Dear

friends, I would like to say, once more, about this, that *this promise does not preclude our suffering very greatly*, or our dying and perhaps, dying a very sad and terrible death as men judge. God never left Paul, but I have seen the spot where Paul's head was chopped off by the executioner.

The Lord never left Peter, but Peter, like his Master, had to die by crucifixion. The Lord never left the martyrs, but they had to ride to heaven in chariots of fire. The Lord has never left His church, but oftentimes His church has been trampled as straw is trodden for the dunghill. Her blood has been scattered over the whole earth and she has seemed to be utterly destroyed. Still, you know, the story of the church is only another illustration of my text—God has not failed her, nor forsaken her! In the deaths of her saints, we read not defeat, but victory! As they passed away one by one, stars ceasing to shine below, they shone with tenfold brilliance in the upper sky because of the clouds through which they passed before they reached their celestial spheres.

Beloved, we may have to groan in a Gethsemane, but God will not fail us! We may have to die on a Golgotha, but He will not forsake us. We shall rise again and as our Master was triumphant through death, even so shall *we* through the greatest suffering and the most terrible defeats rise to His throne!

IV. I must pass on again, and occupy you for a few moments over a fourth point, which is this. WHAT, THEN, DOES THE TEXT MEAN, IF WE MAY HAVE ALL THIS TRIAL HAPPENING TO US? It means to those to whom it belongs, first, *no failure for your work.* Secondly, *no desertion for yourself*. "I will not fail you." *Your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.* What is it? Is it the great work of preaching the gospel to thousands? God will not fail you in that. I remember how, 20 years ago, I was preaching the gospel in the simplicity of my heart and some little stir was made. But the wise men of the day made light of it and said it was all to end in six months' time.

We went on, did we not? And by-and-by, when we had still greater crowds listening to us, it was, "A temporary excitement, a sort of religious spasm." It would all end like a mere flash in the pan, they said. I wonder where those prophets are now? If there are any of them here, I hope they feel comfortable in the unfulfilled prophecy which they can now study with some degree of satisfaction. Thousands on earth and hundreds in heaven can tell what God has worked! Is it another kind of work, dear brother, that you are engaged in; a very quiet, unobtrusive, unobserved effort? Well, I should not wonder that, little as it is, somebody or other sneers at it.

There is scarcely a David in the world without an Eliab to sneer at him. Press on, brother! Stick to it, plod away, work hard, trust in your God, and your work will not fail. We have heard of a minister who added only one to his church through a long year of very earnest ministry—only one! A sad thing for him—but that one happened to be Robert Moffat—and he was worth a thousand of most of us! Go on; if you bring but *one* to Christ, who shall estimate the value of the one? Your class is very small just now. God does not seem to be working. Pray about it, get more

scholars into the class, and teach better, and even if you should not see immediate success, do not believe that it is all a failure. Never was a true gospel sermon preached yet, with faith and prayer that was a failure!

Since the day when Christ, our Master, first preached the gospel, unto this day—I dare to say it—there was never a true prayer that failed, nor a true declaration of the gospel made in a right spirit that fell to the ground without prospering according to the pleasure of the Lord. Fire away, brother! Every shot lands somewhere, for in heavenly as well as earthly warfare, "Every bullet has its billet." And then there shall be *no desertion as to yourself*, for your heavenly Friend has said, "I will not *forsake you*." You will not be left alone or without a helper. You are thinking of what you will do in old age. Do not think of that—think of what *God* will do for you in old age! O, but your great need and long illness will wear out your friends, you say. Perhaps you may wear out your friends, but you will not wear out your *God*—and He can raise up new helpers if the old ones fail.

O, but your infirmities are many and will soon crush you down! You cannot live long in such circumstances. Very well, then, you will be in heaven and that is far better. But you dread pining sickness. It may never come. But, suppose it should come, remember what will come with it—"I will make all your bed in your sickness." "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." So runs the promise. "Fear you not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God." "The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but the covenant of My love shall not depart from you, says the Lord, that has mercy on you." You shall not be alone! You shall not wring your hands in despair and say, "I am utterly wretched, like the pelican of the wilderness—utterly forsaken like the owl of the desert." The mighty God of Jacob forsakes not His own.

V. And so this brings me to the last point, which is this—WHY MAY WE BE QUITE SURE THAT THIS PROMISE WILL BE FULFILLED? I answer first, we may be quite sure because *it is God's promise*. Did ever any promise of God fall to the ground? There are those in the world who are challenging us continually and saying, "Where is your God?" They deny the efficacy of prayer. They deny the interpositions of providence. Well, I do not wonder that they do. The bulk of Christians do not realize, either, the answer to prayer or the interposition of providence—for this reason—that they do not live in the light of God's countenance, or live by faith.

But the man who walks by faith will tell you that he notices providence and never is deficient of a providence to notice—that he notices answers to his prayer—and never is without an answer to his prayer. What is a wonder to others becomes a common fact of everyday life to the believer in Christ! Where God has given His Word, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you," let us believe it, for—

"His very Word of grace is strong
As that which built the skies;
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises."

Rest well assured that if a man is called to do God's work, God will not fail him because *it is not after the manner of the Lord to desert His servants*. David, in the dark days of his sin bade Joab place Uriah, the Hit-

tite, in the forefront of the battle and leave him there to die by the hand of the children of Ammon. Was it not cruel? It was base and treacherous to the last degree!

Can you suspect the Lord of anything so unworthy? God forbid! My soul has known what it is to plead with the Lord my God after this fashion—"Lord, You have placed me in a difficult position and given me service to perform far beyond my capacity. I never coveted this prominent place and if You do not help me now, why have You placed me in it?" I have always found such argument to be prevalent with God. He will not push His servants into severe conflicts and then fail them! Besides, remember that *should God's servants fail*, if they are really God's servants, *the enemy would exult and boast against the Lord Himself*.

This was a great point with Joshua in later days. He said, "The Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what will You do unto Your great name?" If the Lord raises up Luther and does not help Luther, then it is not Luther that fails—it is God that fails in the estimation of the world. If the Lord sends a man to bear witness to a truth and that man's testimony utterly breaks down, then in the estimation of men, it is the *truth* that breaks down, and consequently dishonor is cast upon God and His truth—and He will not have it so. If He uses the weakest instrumentality, He will laugh to scorn His adversaries by it, and they shall never say that the Lord was overcome.

Besides, if God has raised you up, my brethren, to accomplish a purpose by you, *do you think He will be defeated*? Were ever any of His designs frustrated? I have heard preachers talk about God being defeated by the free will of man and disappointed by man's depravity and I know not what else! But such a god is no god of mine! My God is One who has His will and will have it—who, when He designs a thing, accomplishes it! He is a God whose omnipotence none can resist, concerning whom it may be said, "Who shall stay His hand, or say unto Him, What are you doing?" The mighty God of Jacob puts His hand to a design and carries it through as surely as He begins! The weakness of the instrument in His hand does not hinder Him, nor do the opposition of His enemies deter Him! Only believe in Him and weak as you are, you shall perform wonders—and in your feebleness, the strength of God shall be glorified!

Besides, my brethren, if we trust God and live for God, *He loves us much too well to leave* us. It is not as though we were aliens, and strangers, and foreigners—mercenary troops whom the prince who hires them leaves to be cut in pieces! No, we are His own dear *children*! God sees Himself in all His servants. He sees in them the members of the body of His dear Son. The very least among them is as dear to Him as the apple of His eye and beloved as His own soul. It is not to be imagined that He will ever put a load upon His own children's shoulders without giving them strength to bear the burden, or send them to labors for which He will not give them adequate resources! O, rest in the Lord, you faithful. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him," for He will appear unto your rescue. Has He not said, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you"?

As I have thus been bringing forth marrow and fatness from the Word, I have been thinking of some of you, poor souls, who cannot eat thereof and have no share in it. I am glad to see you here, especially on Thursday night, for it is not every unconverted person that will come to these weeknight services. You must have a hungering after these good things, or you would not be here in such numbers. I hope your mouths are watering after the good things of the covenant. I hope, as you see the promises of God on the table and see how rich they are, you will say to yourself, "Would God I had a share in them!"

Well, poor soul, if God gives you an appetite, I can only say the food is free! If you would have God to be your helper—if you would, indeed, be saved by Christ—come and welcome, for you are the soul that He desires to bless! If you have half a wish towards God, He has a *longing* towards you! If you desire Him, you have not a step up on Him—depend upon it, He has long before desired you! Come to Him! Rest in Him! Accept the atonement which His Son has presented. Begin the life of faith in real earnest and you shall find that what I have said is all true—only it falls short of the *full* truth, for you will say, like the Queen of Sheba when she had seen Solomon's glory—"The half has not been told me."

Blessed be the Lord forever, who has taught my poor heart to believe in Himself and to live upon unseen realities, and rest in a faithful God! There is no peace or joy like it, or worthy to be mentioned in the same day. God grant it to each one of you, beloved, for His name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 63.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—34 (VERSE 1), 742, 745.

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SOLEMN PLEADINGS FOR REVIVAL
NO. 1215

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 3, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Keep silence before Me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment."
Isaiah 41:1.

THE text is a challenge to the heathen to enter into a debate with the living God. The Lord bids them argue at their best and let the controversy be calmly carried out to its issues, so as to be decided once and for all. He bids them be quiet, reflect, and consider, in order that with renewed strength they may come into the discussion and defend their gods if they can. He urges them not to bring flippant arguments, but such as have cost them thought and have weight in them, if such arguments can be. He bids them be quiet till they are prepared to speak and then, when they can produce their strong reasons and set their cause in the best possible light, He challenges them to enter the lists and see if they can maintain, for a moment, that their gods are gods, or anything better than deceit and falsehood.

I am not about to speak of that controversy at this time, but to use the text with quite another view. We, also, who worship the Lord God Most High, have a controversy with *Him*. We have not seen His church and His cause prospering in the world for many a day as we would desire. As yet heathenism is not put to the rout by Christianity; neither does the truth everywhere trample down error. Nations are not born in a day, nor have the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. We desire to reason with God about this and He, Himself, instructs us how to prepare for this sacred debate.

He bids us be silent. He bids us consider and then draw near to Him with holy boldness and plead with Him. He bids us produce our cause and bring forth our strong reasons. It seems to me that at the beginning of the year, I cannot suggest to Christian people a more urgent topic than this, that we should plead with God that He would display among us greater works of grace than as yet our eyes have seen. We have read of wonderful revivals. History records the prodigies of the Reformation and the marvelous way in which the gospel was spread during the first two centuries. We pine to see the same, again, or to know the reason why it is not so—and with holy boldness it is our desire to come before the Lord and plead with Him—as a man pleads with his friend. May God help us to do so in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I. First, then, LET US BE SILENT. "Keep silence before me, O islands." Before the controversy opens, let us be silent with solemn awe, for we

have to speak with the Lord God Almighty! Let us not open our mouths to impugn His wisdom, nor allow our hearts to question His love. What if things do not look as bright as we would wish? The Lord reigns! And what if He seems to delay? Is He not the Lord God with whom a thousand years are as one day, and who is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness? We are going to be bold to speak with Him, but still, He is the eternal God and we are dust and ashes. Whatever we may say with holy boldness, we would not utter a word in rash familiarity. He is our Father, but He is our Father in heaven. He is our Friend, but at the same time, He is our Judge. We know that whatever He does is best. We would not say unto our Maker, "What have You made?" Nor to our Creator, "What have You done?" Shall the potter give account to the clay for the works of his hands? "It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him." When we look at what He does, it may seem to our dim apprehension to be exceedingly strange, and we may fail to read its meaning. But we need not wish to read it. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing and if He chooses to conceal it, let it be concealed! Truly, God is good to Israel and His mercy endures forever! If this world's history is to drag on through another score of mournful centuries, it will only reveal so much the more matter for praise when the great hallelujahs of the ultimate victory shall peal forth.

Our silence of awe should deepen into that of *shame,* for, my brethren, though it is certainly true that the cause of God has not prospered, whose fault is this? If there has been straitening, it has not been in God. Where, then, has it been? If the seed has rotted under the clods, or if the cankerworm has eaten the green shoot so that the reaper has not joyfully filled his arm, from where does it come? Has there not been sin among us, yes, sin in the church of God? What if Israel has turned her back in the day of battle? Is there not an accursed thing in the camp and an Achan who has hidden away the goodly Babylonian garment and the shekel of gold? God says, "Is there not a cause? Can two walk together, except they be agreed? If you walk contrary to Me, I also will walk contrary to you." Truly, when I see how God has blessed us, I am not so much astonished that He has not given more as I am amazed that He has given so much! Does He bless such unworthy instruments, such laggards, such slothful workers? Does He do anything by tools so unfit? Does He place any treasure in vessels so impure? This is to be ascribed to His grace. But if He does not use us to the highest point, let us take shame and confusion of face to ourselves—and before the throne of His glory let us sit down in silence. What, indeed, can we say? We have no charges, no accusations to bring against the Most High, but we must silently confess that we, ourselves, are vile. Unto us belongs shame and confusion of face.

Go further than this and keep the silence of *consideration.* This is a noisy age and the church of Christ, herself, is too noisy. I fear we have very little *silent* worship. I do not so much regret the absence of silence from the public assembly as from our private devotions, where it has a sacred hallowing influence, unspeakably valuable. Let us be silent, now,

for a minute, and consider what is it that we desire of the Lord: the conversion of thousands; the overthrow of error; the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom. Think in your minds what the blessings are which your soul pants after. Get a correct idea of them and then inquire whether you are prepared to receive them. Suppose they were to be now bestowed? Are you ready? If thousands of converts were to be born unto this one church, are you prepared to teach them, instruct them, and comfort them? Are you doing it now, you Christian people? Are you acting in such a way that God knows you to be fit to have the charge of those converts that you are asking for? You pray for divine grace—are you using the grace you have? You want to see more power—how about the power you have? Are you employing it? If a mighty wave of revival sweeps over London, are your hearts ready? Are your hands ready? Are your purses ready? Are you altogether ready to be carried along on the crest of that blessed wave? Consider. If you reflect, you will see that God is able to give His church the largest blessing and to give it at any time! Keep silence and consider, and you will see that He can give the blessing by you or by me—He can make any one of us, weak as we are—mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds! He can make our feeble hands, though we have but a few loaves and fishes, capable of feeding myriads with the bread of life. Consider this, and this morning ask yourselves, in the quiet of your spirits, what can we do to get the blessing? Are we doing that? What is there in our temper, in our private prayer, in our acts for God which would be likely to bring down the blessing? Do we act as if we were sincere? Have we *really* a desire for these things which we say we desire? Could we give up worldly engagements to attend to the work of God? Could we spare time to look after the Lord's vineyard? Are we willing to do the Lord's work and are we in the state of heart in which we can do it efficiently and acceptably? Keep silence and consider. I would suggest to every Christian that he should sit a while before God, when he reaches his home, and worship with the silence of awe, with the silence of shame—and then with the silence of careful thought concerning these things.

Then we shall pass on to the silence of *attention*. "Keep silence before Me, O islands." Keep silence that God may speak to you. That God's Word may be heard in your soul, not only *parts* of it, but all of it! That God's Spirit may be heard with His gentle monitions warning you—with His blessed enlightenments revealing to you, yourself and your Lord—with His divine promptings urging you to greater consecration and superior holiness. And with His divine assistances, leading you onward in the path of a higher life than you have yet attained. O, it is well to sit still before the Lord, deaf to every voice but the divine! We cannot expect Him to hear us if we will not hear Him. "I will hear," says the prophet, "what God the Lord will speak." Do *you* always do so? If you have heard the Lord speak to you, you will admit that there is no voice like His. Be silent till you hear the Lord's Word slaying all your pride and self-will and self-seeking and proclaiming His sole glory in every part of your manhood.

If you have learned attention, be silent with *submission*. For this you will need the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit. It is not easy to attain to full submission of soul to whatever the Lord wills. We are often like hard brass which will not take the impression from the seal. If we were what we should be, we should be as melted wax which at once takes the stamp that is put upon it. O, to have a heart that is quite silent as to any wish or will, or opinion, or judgment of our own, so that God's mind shall be *our* mind, God's will shall be *our* will! The church would soon be healed of her sorrows and delivered from her divisions if she would, for a while, be silent. But the voice of a favorite teacher is heard by some, and the voice of another master in Israel is listened to by others—and so God's voice is lost amid the clamor of sects and the uproar of parties. O, that the church would sit at Jesus' feet, lay aside her prejudices and take the Word in its simplicity and integrity—and accept what God the Lord, and He only, does declare to be the truth! I invite the members of this church and urge the members of all churches to see to this. See to it that we cry unto the Lord for a blessed silence in His presence till we sit, like servants, waiting for their Master's word, and stand like watchmen waiting for the Master's coming—ourselves quiet, restful, peaceful, resigned—no, acquiescing in the divine will, all attentive to hear each word that falls from Him and resolved with humble resolution that whatever the Lord shall speak, that will we do. We will accent His Word as law, light, and life to our souls and nothing else! May the Lord send that solemn silence over all His people now!

II. In that silence, LET US RENEW OUR STRENGTH. Noise wears us out. Silence feeds us. To run upon the Master's errands is always well. But to sit at the Master's feet is quite as necessary, for like the angels which excel in strength, our power to do His commandments arises out of our hearkening to the voice of His Word. If even for a human controversy, quiet thought is a fit preparation, how much more is it necessary in solemn pleadings with the Eternal One? Now, let the deep springs be unsealed! Let the solemnities of eternity exercise their power while all is still within us.

But how does it happen that such silence renews our strength? It does so, first, by *giving space for the strengthening Word to come into the soul and the energy of the Holy Spirit to be really felt*. Words, words, words! We have so many words and they are but chaff! But where is THE WORD that in the beginning was God and was with God? That Word is the living and incorruptible Seed! "What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord." We need less of the words of man and more of Him who is the very Word of God! Be quiet, be quiet, and let Jesus speak! Let His wounds speak to you. Let His death speak to you. Let His resurrection speak to you. Let His ascension and His subsequent glory speak to you. And let the trumpet of His Second Advent ring in your ears. You cannot hear the music of these glorious things for the rattle of the wheels of care and the vain jangle of disputatious self-wisdom. Be silent, that you may hear the voice of Jesus, for when He speaks, you will renew your strength. The eternal Spirit is with His people, but we often miss His power because we give

more ear to other voices than to His, and quite as often, our own voice is an injury to us, for it is heard when we have received no message from the Lord and therefore, gives an uncertain sound. If we will wait upon the blessed Spirit, His mysterious influence will sway us most divinely, and we shall be filled with all the fullness of God. Even as we have seen the frost yield suddenly to the influence of the warm south wind, so shall our lethargy melt before His sovereign energy. How often have I felt, in a moment, my ice-locked spirit yield to the breath of the Holy Spirit! You have seen a cloud on high flying, as you thought, against the wind, driven on by some upper current of air which you did not feel below. Even thus have we been carried on by upper currents which flesh and blood cannot understand. We sang as Dr. Watts does—

"Look how we grovel here below,
Fond of these trifling toys.
Our souls can neither fly nor go
To reach eternal joys."

But when the Holy Spirit came, the lightning, itself, could not overtake us! We rode upon a cherub and did fly. Yes, we did ride upon the wings of the wind, for God, the Everlasting One, had caught us up and filled us with His power! Be silent, then, that the Spirit may thus work upon you. Let other spirits be gone—let the spirit of the world, and the spirit of the flesh, and the spirit of self be banished—and let the Spirit of the Ever Blessed be heard speaking in your soul. Thus shall you renew your strength.

We must be silent to renew our strength, next, by *using silence for consideration as to who it is that we are dealing with.* We are going to speak with God about the weakness of His church and the slowness of its progress. Be silent, that you may remember who He is with whom you are expostulating. It is God the omnipotent, who can make His church mighty if He will and that at once! We are coming to plead, now, with One whose arm is not shortened, and whose ear is not heavy. Renew your strength as you think of Him! If you have doubted the ultimate success of Christianity, renew your strength as you remember who it is that has sworn by Himself that surely all flesh shall see the salvation of God! You are coming to plead with Jesus Christ! Be silent and remember those wounds of His with which He has redeemed mankind! Can these fail of their reward? Shall Jesus be robbed of the power He has so dearly earned? The earth is the Lord's and He will unsheathe her of the mists which dimmed her luster at the fall. He will make this planet shine as brightly as when she first was rolled from between the palms of the omnipotent Creator. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth in which dwells righteousness! Think of that, and renew your strength. Has not the Lord said, concerning His beloved Son, that He shall divide the spoil with the strong, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands? Shall it not be so?

Think, too that you are about to appeal to the Holy Spirit and there, again, you have the same divine attributes. What cannot the Spirit of God do? He sent the tongues of fire at Pentecost and Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, and men of every nation heard the gospel at once! He

turned 3,000 hearts by one sermon to know the crucified Savior to be the Messiah. He sent the apostles like flames of fire through the whole earth, till every nation felt their power. He can do the same again! He can bring the church out of darkness into noonday! Let us renew our strength as we think of this. The work we are going to plead about is not ours one-half so much as it is God's! It is not in our hands, but in hands that cannot fail! Therefore, let us renew our strength as we silently meditate upon the Triune Jehovah with whom we have to speak.

In silence, too, let us renew our strength by *remembering His promises*. We want to see the world converted to God and He has said, "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." "They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust." "The idols He shall utterly abolish." There are a thousand promises! Let us think of that and however difficult the enterprise may be, and however dark our present prospects, we shall not dare to doubt when Jehovah has spoken and pledged His Word!

Our strength will be renewed, next, if in silence we *yield up to God all our own wisdom and strength*. Brethren, I never am so full as when I am empty. I have never been as strong as in the extremity of weakness. The source of our worst weakness is our strength and the source of our worst folly is our personal wisdom. Lord, help us to be still till we have given up ourselves, till we have said, "Lord, our ways of working cannot be compared with Your ways of working. Teach us how to work! Lord, our judgments are weak compared with Your perfect judgment. We are fools—be You our teacher and guide in all things. Crush out of us our fancied strength and make us like worms, for it is the worm Jacob that You will make into the new sharp threshing instrument which shall thresh the mountain!" After this sort shall you renew your strength.

Keep silence, then, you saints, till you have felt your folly and your weakness—and then renew your strength most gloriously *by casting yourselves upon the strength of God*. More than ever before, let your inmost souls be filled with trust in the arm that never fails, the hand that never loses its cunning, the eyes that are never closed, and the heart that never wavers. Jehovah works everywhere and all things are His servants. He works in the light and we see His glory. But He equally works in the darkness, where we cannot perceive Him. His wisdom is too profound to be at all times understood of mortal men. Let us be patient and wait His time, for as surely as God lives, the idols must go down, the crescent of Mohammed must die forever, and the harlot of the seven hills must be devoured with fire—the Lord has said it—and so it must be! Jehovah has declared it, and who shall say He is a liar? With no more doubt of our Father's power than the child at its mother's breast has of its mother's love—with no more doubt than an angel before the throne can have of Jehovah's majesty—let us commit ourselves, each one after his own fashion, to suffering and to labor for the grand cause of God, feeling well assured that neither labor nor suffering can be in vain in the Lord!

Thus much, then, concerning the renewing of our strength. I wish we could have had a quarter of an hour's silence that you might reflect upon these topics, but I leave them with you, trusting that you will seek that silence at home and so renew your strength.

III. Our text proceeds to add, "Then let them draw near." Beloved, you that know the Lord, I would urge you to DRAW NEAR. You are silent. You have renewed your strength. Now enjoy access with boldness! The condition in which to intercede for others is not that of distance from God, but that of great nearness to Him. Even thus did Abraham draw near when he pleaded for Sodom and Gomorrah. May God the Holy Spirit draw us near, even now. Perhaps the following five considerations may help us in so doing.

Let us remember *how near we really are*. We have been washed from every sin in the precious blood of Jesus. We are covered from head to foot, at this moment, with the spotless righteousness of Immanuel, God with us! We are accepted in the Beloved! Yes, we are, at this moment, one with Christ and members of His body. How could we be nearer? How near is Christ to God? So near are we! Come near, then, in your personal pleadings, for you are near in your covenant Representative. The Lord Jesus has taken manhood into union with the divine nature and now, between God and man, there exists a special and unparalleled relationship, the likes of which the universe cannot present. No actual blood relationship exists between God and any other creature but man, "For verily He took not up angels, but He took up the seed of Abraham." "Unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You"? And yet has He said this first and chiefly to the Lord Jesus Christ! And next, in a true but secondary sense, to each regenerate one whom He has, of His own will, begotten by the Word of truth! Come near, then, O you sons of God, come near, for you *are* near! Stand where your sonship places you, where your Representative stands on your behalf. Let the slaves of the flesh and the bondservants of the law stand afar off from the Lord who speaks to them from Sinai. But as for us, it is our joy to come very near, for the voice of love calls to us from Calvary!

The next consideration which may help you to draw near is that *you are coming to a Father*. That was a blessed word of our Lord's, "The Father Himself loves you." God forbid I should say a word to make you think less of the splendor and majesty of God! But I pray you remember that, however great and terrible He is, He is our Father! I delight in those words of our poet—

"The God that rules on high,
And thunders when He please,
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And manages the seas—
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our love."

As surely as my earthly father is near akin to me and I may come to him with loving familiarity, so may I approach the Lord who has begotten me again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! And I may say to Him, "Abba," "Father," and He will not disregard

the cry. Has He not given us the spirit of adoption? How can He despise that which He gives? Come, then, and speak in your Father's ear. O child of God, you are not talking to a stranger! You are not about to hold a debate with an enemy! You are not seeking to wring a blessing from an unwilling hand! It is to your *Father* that you speak! Come near to Him, I pray you, and plead this day!

Remember next, that *the desire which is in our heart for God's glory and the extension of His church, is a desire written there by the Holy Spirit*. Now, if the Holy Spirit, Himself, incites the prayer, and He knows the mind of God, if He makes intercession in our hearts according to the will of God, we need have no hesitation to express our desires because our desires are simply the *shadow* of the eternal purpose! And that which always was in the mind of God to give, the Spirit of God has inclined us to ask! True prayer is the intimation of God to man that He intends to bless Him. It is the herald of mercy. Plead, then, O child of God, for the Spirit of God is pleading in you! Come and speak out that which He speaks within. He Himself helps your infirmities, making intercession in you according to the will of God. When the Spirit prompts, what cause can there be for hesitation? We must speak when He inspires.

Remember next, *that what we ask*, if we are now about to plead with God concerning His kingdom, *is according to His own mind*. We are at one with God in this matter. If it were not for God's glory for sinners to be converted, we would not pray for it. We desire to see thousands of sinners turn to Christ, but it is with this view—that the infinite mercy, wisdom, power, and love of God may be manifested towards them—and so God may be praised. Verily, much as our heart is set upon the prosperity of the church of God, if it were conceivable that such prosperity would not glorify God we would not ask for it! We desire to see not *our* notions, but God's truth prevail! I do not want you to believe as I believe except so far as that belief is according to the mind of God. I pray every believer here to search his heart and see whether his desire is a pure one, having God's glory as its Alpha and Omega. It is God's truth, God's kingdom, God's glory that we want to see promoted! If this is the case, may we not come very boldly? We have not only the king's ear but His heart, also, and we may open our mouths wide. When we have a question as to the Lord's will, we are bound to go no further than, "Nevertheless, not as I will." But when there is no ground for hesitancy, with what sacred ardor may we press our suit!

Moreover, there is this further consideration—*the Lord loves to be pleaded with*. He might have given all the covenant blessings without prayer—why does He compel us to use entreaties unless it is that He loves to hear the voices of His children? God has given to the church untold mercies in answer to intercession, for He delights to bless His people at the Mercy Seat. In this, our own beloved church, prayer has been more glorious and excellent than all mountains of prey. Its bow has not returned empty, neither has its shield been cast away! Prayer has been bolder than the lion, swifter than the eagle, and has overthrown all her adversaries, treading them beneath her feet as straw is trod for the

dunghill! To this day, we *live* by prayer! The church of God has never gained a victory, but in answer to prayer. Her whole history is to the praise of the glory of a prayer-hearing God! Come, then, brethren, if we have sped so well before, and if God invites us now, yes, if He *delights* in our petitions, let us not be slack, but enlarge our requests before Him. O, for grace that we may now, this day, and from now on, draw very near to God!

IV. I may need a few minutes over the allotted time this morning, while I now come to the fourth and last point, which is, "LET US SPEAK." Be silent, renew your strength, draw near, and then speak. What have we to say upon the matter which concerns us? Let us first speak in the spirit of *adoring gratitude*. How sweet to think that there should be a Savior at all! To think that the project of rescuing this poor world from her ruin should ever have been entertained in the courts of heaven! To think that the Spirit should be given to reside among men, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the rebels to obedience to the truth! To think that there should be a heavenly kingdom set up, as it is set up—that it should have made such advances as it has made, and should still grow mightily, is absolutely wonderful! That Jesus Christ should be seen of angels is put down as a wonder, but it is mentioned, next to it, that He was "believed on in the world." He has been believed on by millions, and however gloomy the prospects of the church may appear, the kingdom of Christ is not an insignificant kingdom, even now. Those who deride her laugh too soon. She is in her twilight, as Voltaire said, but it is the twilight of her morning, and not of her evening! Brighter times are coming. But even now, up to this moment, the history of the church cannot be told without adoring gratitude to God. She has been foolish and has lost her strength, but like Samson's, it will return. Deceived and deluded in the days of Constantine, she allowed baptized heathen to proclaim an adulterous connection between the church and the state—and from that day her glory has departed and her power has fled. When will she repent? The nominal church goes after her lovers, seeking her corn and her wine at their hands, and she says to kings and queens of the earth, "Be *you* my head, and let your senators rule me." While she does this God cannot and will not bless her in any great degree. When was the ark taken? Never till it was defended by the carnal sword! When did the ark triumph? Was it not when, left alone in its own glory, it smote Dagon to the ground? When the visible church gets back to her chastity to Christ, she will say, "We have nothing to do with parliaments and kings, except to convert them! Ours is a spiritual kingdom and statecraft is foreign to us. We ask not for your endowments! We care not for your persecutions. Let us alone—all we ask is a clear stage and no favor."

The bride of Christ comes not into the world to toy with the politics of princes—hers is a higher work. She leans upon the Lord, alone, and yields allegiance to none else. Remove worldliness and you will see bright days. The grand impediment of the church, now, is the arm of flesh—the lofty, high-sounding titles of her prelates, the palaces of her bishops—the priestliness of her ministers and the lack of gospel simplicity! Be amazed,

you heavens, that the successors of the apostles should be owners of palaces! This hampers her, but cut the church clear of this, and God's bare arm will soon win victory unto the truth in this land. I, for my part, bless and magnify the Lord that, though a great section of the visible church has played the harlot so sadly in the midst of the nations, yet He has not quite cast her away. He keeps a chosen company who follow the Lamb where ever He goes—on whose banner is written, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." And whose watchword is, "One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren." As to the world, we will seek its conversion, but we will never enter into alliance with it, much less bow down our necks before its kings and princes! May God grant us grace, as we draw near to Him, to speak out in adoration of Him.

Next, let us speak in *humble expostulation*. I would earnestly urge my brethren in Christ to reason thus with the Lord. "O Lord, Your truth does not prosper in the land, yet You have said, 'My word shall not return unto Me void.' Lord, You are every day blasphemed, and yet You have said that Your glory shall be seen of all flesh. Lord, they set up idols, even in this land, where Your martyrs burned. They are setting up graven images again! Lord, tear them down, for Your name's sake. For Your honor's sake, we beseech You, do it! Do You not hear the enemy triumph? They say the gospel is worn out! They tell us that we are the relics of an antiquated race, that modern progress has swept the old faith away. "Will You have it so, good Lord? Shall the gospel be accounted a worn-out almanac and shall they set up their new gospels in its place? Souls are being lost, O God of mercy! Hell is being filled, O God of infinite compassion! Jesus sees but few brought to Himself and washed in His precious blood. Time is flying and every year increases the number of the lost! How long, O God, how long? Why do You tarry?" In this manner, order your case before the Lord and He will listen to you.

When you have spoken by way of reason, then turn to *pleading*. Plead with all your skill in argument. "There is Your promise, O Jehovah. Will You not keep it? You have said unto Your Son, Ask of Me, and I will give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession! "We ask in Jesus' name! Do it for Your promise sake! Lord, You have done great things and unspeakable in times gone by! We have heard with our ears and our fathers have told us the wondrous things which You did in their days and in the old times before them. You are the same Lord, therefore, glorify Yourself again! By all the past, we beseech You, reveal Yourself at this present." Plead with the Lord and lay stress upon His glory. Tell Him that it glorifies His mercy to save sinners, and glorifies His wisdom and His power, yes, every attribute of His divine nature. Then plead the merit of His Son. O, brethren, plead the blood! Plead the wounds! Plead the bloody sweat in Gethsemane! Plead the cross! Plead the death and resurrection! Come not away from the mercy seat till with this mighty plea you have won the victory!

I scarcely need remind you at how many points you may get a grip of the covenant angel, for when wrestling with Him, if you but have the will to do it, you may seize Him anywhere and hold Him fast, and say, "I will

not let You go unless You bless me." I wish I could preach like John Knox, but I wish 10 times more that I could *pray* like he did—a man who would not take, "No," for an answer, but won Scotland for Christ—and she remains Christ's still, through John Knox's prayers! It is not possible for prelacy to flourish where Knox has prayed! Oh for prayer such as that, again! King of kings, will You not stretch out Your scepter and save men? Will You not pluck Your sword out of its scabbard and strike Your foes? There are some men to whom God would almost say, as He did to Moses, "Let Me alone." They are favored to use such forcible arguments and valid pleas that wrath forbears and mercy yields the blessing. If we can push on as Moses did with renewed pleading and entreaties, the blessing will come! This is what England, yes, the *world*, needs—men who can plead with God—men who can draw near and then speak!

Again, dear brethren, after we have been silent, after we have renewed our strength, and after we have drawn near to God, let us speak, today, in the way of *dedication*. Now, here I cannot suggest to any man what he, in particular may speak. I charge you before the living God, do not lie to Him, but if you can say this, I pray you say it—"I give to God this day my whole being, absolutely and forever—my body, my soul, my spirit. I have asked that His kingdom may come—I pledge myself, in His sight, to extend that kingdom by every power I possess or may be able to gain, by every opportunity He may put in my way—and by every means which I am able to use." I do not think Jesus ought to have less than that from us, but I know He gets far less. Perhaps the Lord may move some of you young men to say, "Lord, I want to see Your kingdom spread and therefore, I will give myself up to preach the gospel." Perhaps some of you good women here may say, "I will undertake a work of usefulness of some kind or other for Jesus. I am resolved I will." And you who have this world's goods, I hope you will say, "I know that this good work always needs money. By His grace, I have it—it shall be freely given. When I see that the gospel does not spread, I will not have the reflection on my mind that it is retarded by deficiency of pecuniary means while I have gold stored up." I will not suggest to any of you more than this—whatever the Lord moves you to do, do it! But I think when we come to plead with the Lord after this fashion we ought to be able to say, "Lord, spread Your kingdom. It is not my fault if it does not spread. I do for You all I can. I boast not of it, for all I do, I ought to do! I wish I could do a thousand times as much, but still, Lord, during this year of grace, I hope to do much for You which I may have forgotten until this time."

Last of all, brethren, let us speak, still, in the way of *confidence*. However we may complain of the spread of error, the deaths of good men, and the fewness of able ministers to take their places. However we may think the times to be dark and dreary, let us never speak as if God were dead. I walked, some time ago, with one of the most earnest Christians I know of, a very devout man, and he told me he was afraid one day the streets of London would run with blood. He was afraid of an educated democracy which, being uneducated in religion in school board schools, would become clever atheists and cast off all reverence for God and law. And he

gave me an awful picture of what was going to happen. But I touched him on the arm and said, "There is one thing you have forgotten, dear friend—God is not yet dead. What you are dreading will never occur in this land, I am sure. We have an open Bible. We still have some who preach the gospel with all their hearts, and there is still a salt and leaven in the city of London that God will bless to keep down the rottenness and corruption. In spite of all His foes, the Lord reigns." What, my friends? The devil conquer our God? Never! Rome triumphant over Zion? Never! Rome has been very cunning. Satan has done his best in Roman Catholicism. There is no more wisdom left in the devil than he has put into that concern, and if that is confounded, he has lost all. That is his ultimatum—the course of hellish craft can go no further. He has staked all his power in the Church of Rome—and to a certainty, she will be driven before the church of Christ like chaff before the wind! They shall ask and say, "Where is this harlot city that made the nations drunk with the wine of her fornication? That rode upon the scarlet beast up and down upon the earth and had written upon her brow, 'Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots'?" Vain will it be to ask where she is, for they shall answer, "Did you not hear the splash of the millstone as the angel hurled it into the flood, and said, 'Thus terribly shall Babylon fall, and thus no more be found at all'?" Then shall go up the shout, "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns." Let us anticipate the hour! Even now, let every heart shout, "Hallelujah, Hallelujah," and yet again, let us say, "Hallelujah, the Lord reigns, and all must be well."

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TO SOULS IN AGONY
NO. 1216

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

"The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me. I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul...You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling."
Psalm 116:3, 4, 8.

THE great trouble which is here described very probably happened to David long after he had been a believer. He had been living the life of faith, perhaps, for years, in a calm, happy, and quiet manner. But by-and-by, he met with outward tribulation and not a little of inward conflict. At some time or other, it generally happens to a believer, between the setting out at the wicket gate and the crossing of the last river, that he endures a great fight of afflictions. My observation leads me to notice that those who begin with rough times, frequently have a smooth path afterwards, while others, whose first experience was very sunny and peaceful, meet with fierce conflicts farther on. Those who have enjoyed a long, calm, and comparatively easy life, may meet their stormiest hours at the close of their days, for some of the best of God's children, to use an old Puritan's expression, "Are put to bed in the dark." Their sun sets in clouds, but doubtless, it rises again in the full splendor of the eternal morning! Somewhere or other, brethren, you will learn to acknowledge that—

"The path of sorrow, and that path, alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

The saints above who sing the new song are, at least many of them, described by the words, "These are they which came out of great tribulation." That is the general way to heaven and perhaps few travelers reach paradise by any other road.

Let believers, therefore, not count upon immunity from trouble, but let them reckon upon sufficient grace for it. Let them believe that God's choicest letters of love are sent to us in black-edged envelopes. We are frightened at the envelope, but inside, if we know how to break the seal, we shall find riches for our souls. Great trials are the clouds out of which God gives great mercies. Very frequently, when the Lord has an extraordinary mercy to send to us, He employs His rough and grizzled horses to drag it to the door. The smooth rivers of ease are usually navigated by little vessels filled with common commodities, but a huge galleon, loaded with treasure, traverses the deep seas.

Let the children of God learn, from this passage in David's experience, that their best resort in trouble is *prayer*. When the sorrows of death compass you, pray! When the pains of hell get hold upon you, pray! When you find trouble and sorrow, pray! Everything else which prudence and wisdom suggest is to be done in a time of difficulty, but none of these things are to be relied upon by themselves. "Salvation is of the Lord," whether it is salvation from troubles or from sins. You do right to provide the horse for the day of battle, but still, safety is of the Lord. Use the means, but never supplant faith by the *use* of means. When you have done all, trust in God as though you had done nothing, for, "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman watches but in vain." In all things pray! And be well assured that, if at this moment you are in the same plight as David was, prayer will bring you out of it. Prayer is the catholicon, the universal cure! It subdues every disease. In spiritual conflicts, it has a thousand uses. You may say of it, "By this, will I break through a troop; by this, will I leap over a wall; by this, will I put on shield and buckler and by this, will I smite the foe." Prayer can unlock the treasures of God and shut the gates of hell! Prayer can quench the violence of flames and stop the lions' mouths. Prayer can overcome heaven and bend omnipotence to its will. Only pray, brethren, believingly and in the name of the Well-Beloved, and answers of peace must be given to you.

I intend, this evening, to use the text with another view. I mean to accommodate it, as I think lawfully, and to use it as a description of the condition of an awakened sinner. To sinners under conviction, I would address myself, for I know there are such in the congregation. I was glad to hear their cries the other night and I hope, with that, the Lord means to bless them and bring them into liberty. We shall speak, first, of *this poor soul's condition.* Then, of *his course of action;* and then, of *the deliverance he obtained*.

I. First, here is THE WRETCHED CONDITION into which many a poor awakened soul has been brought.

But let me, before I proceed further, say, that if any of you are believers in Christ and have not felt all that I speak of, you are not to condemn yourselves because of it. There are many maladies in the world. If I am describing a sickness and the way in which the physician cures it, you must not say, "I am surely wrong, for I never felt that phase of the disease." That does not matter. No man suffers all maladies. If you are resting only upon Jesus, do not disturb yourself—that which I am about to utter is not meant for your disturbance, but for other people's comfort.

From our text, I remark that many a troubled conscience *feels the sorrows of death.* That is to say he is the subject of griefs similar to those which beset men on their dying beds. I have passed through this state, myself, and I shall, therefore, describe it the more feelingly. What are the sorrows of death?

One of the sorrows of a sinner's death is *the retrospect*. The dying sinner looks back and sees nothing in his life that yields him comfort. He could wish that the day had been darkness in which it was said that a

child was born into the world, for he feels that his existence has been a blank and worse than that, an insult to God and the cause of misery to himself. He cannot see a bright or hopeful spot in his whole history. So, too, the man truly awakened weeps over a dreadful past and laments because all is evil and the very things he once gloried in are tarnished. He sees that to have been sin, which before he thought to have been righteousness! And he bemoans himself, saying within his heart, "Would God I had never been born." Many an awakened man has said, as John Bunyan did, that he wished he had been a frog or a toad, or a venomous serpent sooner than have been a man to have lived as he had lived. Are you feeling, dear friend, or have you ever felt that sorrow of death? Some of us have felt it keenly.

Another sorrow of death is grief over *the present*. The man lies tossing to and fro upon his deathbed and all his glory and beauty are gone. The bloom of health has departed from him. He is a very different man from what he was in the days of his agility and vigor—and he knows it. So is it with the sinner—he feels the pining sickness of sin consuming him as the moth consumes a garment. His moisture is turned into the drought of summer. His glory is as a faded flower and the excellence of his flesh, in which he boasted and said that he was no worse than others and perhaps, was even better, is now passed away. The Spirit, when He blows upon man, finding all flesh to be grass, withers it all up—and so He destroys the glory of man's estate and makes his excellency decay till the man is sick to death of himself. The dying man also sees all his strength departing. Perhaps he thinks, like Samson, to shake himself as at other times, but he is mistaken. The limbs that bore him to his bed fall under him and the hand with which he labored drops palsied by his side. The very eyelids scarcely can drop to form a curtain from the light, or lift themselves to admit the blessed beams of the sun. The golden bowl is breaking and the silver cord is being snapped. It is just so with an awakened sinner. He feels death in his soul. He used to be able, as he thought, to do anything! His notion was that he could repent and believe, amend and reform and save himself whenever he liked. But now, the cold chill of death has come upon all his powers and he hears Christ, in mercy, saying, "Without Me you can do nothing. No man can come to Me unless the Father, which has sent Me, draw him." A man experiences a dreadful paralysis in his soul when he is really and thoroughly awakened. The Spirit of God is making sure work of his conversion! He sees his beauty faded and his strength departed and thus, the sorrows of death get hold upon him.

Another present sorrow of death is the discovery that friends are no longer of any service. The dying man must leave wife and children. They would gladly accompany him, but they cannot. That dear wife would be willing to dare death, itself, if she might still continue the companion of the man whom she has loved, but it must not be. The fondest affection cannot help, now. The awakened sinner discovers precisely the same thing with regard to spiritual help. He would have looked to a priest, but

he dares not. He would have looked to his minister, but he knows that if he did, he would be disappointed. He finds emptiness written upon every creature, so far as his soul's necessities are concerned. His sore is too terrible for any man to find a plaster, his wound too deep for any human hand to close it up. The sorrows of death, in this respect, compass him.

Perhaps the worst sorrow about the death of an ungodly man is *the prospect*. The past is black, but blacker, still, the future. The present is gloomy, but oh, the darkness, which may be *felt*, which environs the hereafter! The dying man shudders at the awful future and so does the awakened sinner. He dares not go forward! He is afraid and a dreadful sound is in his ears. I, myself, before I obtained mercy, was afraid lest every tuft of grass I trod on should open beneath my feet and swallow me up. So did sin press upon me, that I should not have been astonished if I had met, in my daily walks, an angel, as Balaam did, with a drawn sword! And if he had said to me, "You are doomed forever for your sin," I could only have been dumb before him, or confessed the justice of the sentence. Thus does many a sinner feel the sorrows of death compass him. They are all around him—those sorrows of the past, the present, and the future.

The description becomes yet more graphic in the next sentence. *Awakened sinners sometimes feel what they describe as the pains of hell.* Not that any living man does endure the pains of hell to the extent which they are suffered in hell, but still a dreadful foretaste of those pains may be experienced, and sometimes is experienced, by an awakened conscience. What are these pains of hell?

First, there is the pain of *remorse*. Before the soul believes in Christ, it has no repentance, but it suffers remorse—a sorrow for sin because of its penalty! It is a dreadful horror of having lived such a life because it sees that it must be punished for that life, and that God, the infinitely just, must take vengeance upon its transgressions. Remorse! Is not its tooth as sharp as that of the undying worm? Is not its burning as the fires of Tophet? When we felt it, we cried, "My soul chooses strangling rather than life!" If God, in mercy, did not stay the soul with some little wavering hope, even before it comes to faith in Jesus, surely the spirit of man would utterly fail under a remorseful sense of sin!

One of the pains of hell is a sense of *condemnation*. The lost souls are called the "Damned"—in other words, *the condemned*. Assuredly, before we believed in Jesus, some of us felt that we were condemned. "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." I remember how that curse howled through my soul like the tempest shrieking among the shrouds of a sinking ship. "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them"—I knew that I had not continued in all things required by the law—and I knew that I was cursed! And then came this other text. It was the gospel side of the same terrible blast—"He that believes not is condemned already"—*condemned already*—"because he has not believed on the Son of God." When two such winds, as those two

texts, meet each other, it is enough to sweep the poor frail tenement of manhood to a ruin like that which overthrew the house in which the sons of Job were met to feast! Oh, brethren, it is no little thing—let those who know it assure you—to have felt the pains of hell!

Perhaps one of the acutest pangs of an awakened conscience is a sense of *hopelessness*, a terrible despair, unalleviated by any prospect of improvement in the future. We were driven to that, too, some of us. All hope of our being saved was lost. There was, sometimes, a little twinkling ray of light which seemed to say, "Jesus came to seek and to save sinners." But we could not even see that lone star at all times, for we thought that He did not come to seek and to save such sinners as *we* were and moreover, since we had rejected Him before, we feared that His mercy was clean gone forever! How despairingly was I known to harp upon that thought! I now wish I had not done so, but I know that some others do it and I would speak to their experience. May God deliver their frail boats from the whirlpools of despair, that awful whirlpool which has sucked down so many!

There is another pang of hell which the awakened feel and that is *a crushing sense of misery*. Though not in hell yet—and blessed be God you will not be—yet some of you feel almost as wretched as if you were there, for remorse, intensified by a sense of condemnation and lashed by despair, creates a dreadful storm within your soul, till your heart cries out—

"At noise of Your dread waterspout
Deep unto deep does call!
Your breaking waves go over me,
Yes, and Your billows all.
I am cast out from Your sight:
I seek You, but I cannot find You:
I cry after You, but You hear me not."

Then is the soul smitten, indeed. Read the books of Job and Jeremiah and you will see what broken hearts can suffer. Those books were not written for people in olden times only, but they declare the present experience of many a seeker after Christ—and thus they oftentimes render comfort to poor souls when no other portion of God's Word seems to have a single syllable to speak to them.

Thus I have taken two great sentences of the text—"The sorrows of death compassed me" and "The pains of hell got hold upon me." But the case was worse than this, for *the poor soul felt no alleviation* and knew of no escape. These things were, by themselves, unsoftened. They were left in all their terror—the gall was unmixed, the vinegar undiluted. Notice the language. "The sorrows of death *compassed me*." It is a very strong word. When hunters seek their prey, they form a circle around the poor animal that is to be destroyed. The poor panting creature looks to the right, but a man with a spear is there. He looks to the left and there are the dogs. Before and behind him are more spearmen, more hounds, more hunters—there is no way of escape. So does an awakened soul discern no rescue, no loophole by which it may be delivered.

The text says, "The pangs of hell *got hold upon me*." "Got hold." As if the jaws of the lion had really gripped the lamb, or the paws of the bear were hugging the poor defenseless sheep. "Got hold upon me." As though God's terrible sergeant from the court of justice had laid his hand upon his shoulder and said, "I arrest you in the name of God to lie in hell's prison and perish forever." Many a soul has felt that and felt, also, that it could not get away from the terrible grip. Some who know nothing of contrition and heartbreak inquire, "Why don't they get out of such bondage?" Ah, but if you were in that condition, such a question would grieve, if not exasperate you! I have known persons put a great many questions to troubled hearts which they, themselves, could not answer if they were in their state. Do you ask a man who has had both his legs broken, and lies across the rails of the railway—why do you not walk home? Why does he not walk home? Say, rather—why do you ask such a foolish question? When a poor soul is broken to pieces and despairing, tell him what Christ did for him and say very little about what he ought to do! You will never comfort the desponding man by telling him his duty. Speak, rather, of Jesus' love! Poor souls, they are so disturbed and tossed about that they can do nothing! Tell them what Jesus has done! That is the way to bring light to their souls.

Once more, the psalmist felt *no comfort from any exertion that he made*. That takes in the last sentence of the text's description. "I found trouble and sorrow," so that he looked for something, but the only result of his search was that he found trouble and sorrow. Do you remember, beloved believer, in the days when you were under bondage on account of sin—how you bound yourself apprentice to Moses to work out your own salvation by your own goodness? What did you get? Surely you found trouble in the work and sorrow as its wages! You were like a horse at a mill—the whip was used very freely upon you, but it brought you nothing except a sense of failure—a conviction that all you had done was rather a provocation of God by setting up an antichrist of your own righteousness. There was no help towards atonement for your sin. You found trouble and sorrow. Perhaps you went to Mr. Legality, and he and his son, Mr. Morality, did what they could for you. But if you were really awakened, all that you got from them was trouble and sorrow. That was the whole result of it. It is just possible that you went over the road to the ceremonial shop—attended one of the ritualistic jogs-houses and went through the performances there. And then you were told that a priest could absolve you and an outward form and ceremony could quiet your mind. Ah, if you were a living soul you found only trouble and sorrow in all that foolery! And now you have come to look upon it with intense contempt—as the most intolerable imposture of any age since man began to seek out many inventions! Vain is it to harp to a hungry belly, or dance to a broken limb! And equally a mockery are all the posturing and lies of Romanism to those whose hearts bleed for sin—

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."

If they look elsewhere, they will find trouble and sorrow, and nothing more.

Assuredly, this a pretty pass to be brought to. What is to be done? What is to be done? Sinner, there is *nothing* to be done! At least, nothing which *you* can do. You are shut up to be saved by Jesus, or to be lost! I liked the remark of a good brother from this platform the other day, when he said that gospel ministers were fishers and that we were to fish with nets. It was all a mistake that we were to catch people with bait—that was angling—and there was nothing about angling in Christ's commission. We are to fish with nets. Now, what is a net for? The net is to shut the fish up. It goes under them, around them, everywhere—and shuts them up so that they cannot get out. That is exactly what God does with poor sinners whom He means to save! He shuts them right up. He puts the net round them and they cannot get out. Only when the net quite encloses his fish can the gospel fisherman get them out of the sea of sin and lift them into the boat where Jesus sits! We must get the net right round them—shut them up by the law that they may be brought to Christ.

Every avenue of escape is closed against you forever, sinner, except one—and that is Christ, who says, "I am the door." There is no other door, neither upwards nor downwards, to the right nor to the left, before nor behind! You are ruined and destroyed, O sinner, and you must perish if left to yourself! There is none in earth, or heaven, that can help you, save One! And O, if the Lord will lead you to look to Him, what a blessed thing it will be!

II. That brings us to the second part of our discourse, which is to speak about the awakened sinner's COURSE OF ACTION. "*Then called I upon the name of the Lord.*"

What did he do? First, *he called*—called upon God's name, invoked Him, spoke to Him, lifted up his heart, and lifted up his voice—called as a man might do who is lost in a fog and calls to a neighbor, hoping to hear a voice that will guide him. Or as one who is far away in the bush of Australia and gives a call in the hope that some human voice may respond to it. This call is often described as a cry—a natural, simple, authentic, unpleasant, but most effectual style of expressing our distress. Oh, sinner, if God has really been at work with you and you are where I have been describing, you will call to God *now*! Your heart will cry to God at once! Tears will speak for you, sighs will speak for you. Your heart, in its *silence,* will speak unto God and call upon His name!

Now, notice he says, "Then called I upon the name of the *Lord."* There will be no more calling upon ministers, or calling upon priests, or calling upon yourself, but "Then called I upon the name of the *Lord*." The sinner had forgotten the Lord till then, and now the Lord came to his remembrance. "When he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare?" Thus his father came to the prodigal's remembrance. When we get among the swine and would gladly fill our bellies with their husks, but cannot, *then,* we begin to pray to God

whom we have forgotten. "Then called I upon the name of the Lord." Now, what better could he do, for who could help him if the sorrows of death compassed him? Who but He who overthrew death and vanquished the grave? Who can help us, when the pains of hell get hold upon us, but He who has passed through the pains that were due us for the death penalty—and who has cast both death and hell into the lake of fire? Who can help the hopeless one so well as the Conqueror of death and hell? Who can sympathize like the Lord? The Lord Jesus, Himself, has known the sorrows of death and therefore, He is touched with compassion for the sons of men. Is He not the Son of Man, Himself, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin? Poor sinner, I tried to shut you up, but now, I set before you an open door! Call upon the name of Him who knows your condition, is able to meet it, and to deliver you!

When did he call? That is the important point in this text. "*Then* called I upon the name of the Lord." *Then*. Was that the first time in his life? Perhaps it was. Begin at once, O sinner! Notice, he says, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me. I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord." When his condition was at its very worst, then he called upon God. Why did he not stop till he became better? He knew that delays are dangerous. "*Then* called I." Had he tarried till he was better, he would never have called at all, but he called then and though it was the first time, he was not ashamed to break the ice, or if he *was* ashamed, he did it anyway and succeeded! Suppose that you never, till this night, did ever look to your heavenly Father, and now it is the worst state of life with you that you were ever in. What then? Even now is the time for prayer! Now you need your God and now you may have your God! "*Then* called I." You see, he did not call upon God till God sent death and hell after him. He was a wandering sheep and so set on going astray that he would not come back till the two fiercest dogs that the Great Shepherd keeps had come after him! And then he came back with a passion!

I half wish that God would send death and hell after some of you who never will come—that they might worry you and tear you—and make you return to the Great Shepherd. "*Then* called I." That is to say, when I could call on no one else; no sinner ever calls upon God till he finds that he has nowhere else to go! And yet the Lord receives these good-for-nothings! Although we only come because we have nowhere else to go, yet He will receive us! Into the port of sovereign grace no vessel ever runs except through stress of weather—when the sea is rough and the wind furious. When the tempest is on and the ship must go down or else—then Lord Will-Be-Will, who has held the helm before and said, "I will never enter that harbor"—is suddenly subdued and cries, "Oh for a gust of heavenly wind to blow us between the two red lights, right into the safe waters where we may ride at peace." I pray God to send a tempest after all of you Jonahs that you may be brought to the right place, after all, and landed safely on the shore of sovereign mercy. "Then called I upon the name of the Lord."

And now, for his prayer. Here it is—"O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul." *A very natural prayer*, was it not? He just said what he meant, and meant what he said, and that is the way to pray! It is *a very short prayer*. Many a prayer is too long by at least 20 lines. It is smothered under a bed full of words. There are times when a Christian can pray from hour to hour—but it is a great mistake when brethren measure their supplications by the clock. The great matter is not how long you pray, but how *earnestly* you pray. Consider the life of the prayer rather than the length of the prayer. If your prayer reaches to heaven, it is long enough! What longer can it need to be? If it does not reach the Lord, though it occupied you for a week, it would not be long enough to be of use.

It was *a humble prayer*—"O Lord, I beseech You." It is the language of one who is bowed in the dust. It was *an intense prayer*—"O Lord, I *beseech* You, deliver my soul." But I want you most of all to notice that it was *a scriptural prayer*. There are three great little prayers in Scripture—"O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul." "God, be merciful to me a sinner." And, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." These are all contained in the Lord's prayer. "O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul," is, "Deliver us from evil." "God be merciful to me a sinner"—what is that, but, "Forgive us our trespasses"? And what is the prayer, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom," but that grand petition, "Your kingdom come"? How wonderfully comprehensive is that prayer which our Lord Jesus has given us for a model! All prayers may be condensed into it, or distilled from it.

Let no person here say, "I am in the distress which you have described, but I cannot pray." Why not? "I have no words." You need no words—wordless prayers are frequently the best. "But I can only groan." Groan away, brother! "But I feel as if I could only sigh." Sigh, then! "My heart aches, but I do not know how to express myself." Do not express yourself—let your heart ache on—only let it ache up to God! Turn all your desires towards Him and let this be the intense pleading of your spirit—"O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul." You know we have a law that people must not beg in the streets. There is a man I know on a certain road who does not beg and yet begs. The police would not let him beg and therefore, he never begs at all—not he! It would be a slander to say of him that he begs! But he wears a pair of shoes through which you can see his toes and the side of his heel. You can spy his knees through his trousers. His cheeks are all sunken and his whole appearance is that of a consumptive man who must soon die. He has been consuming now for many years and dying daily most comfortably! I believe that if I were to say to him, "Are you a beggar?" he would reply, "Beggar? No, sir, certainly not! I never beg." Yet he is one of the most successful of beggars! His *looks* beg! His *rags* beg! His flesh begs! His weariness begs! His general air of sickness begs! Everything about him begs! He begs all over! That is the way to PRAY! Pour out your heart before the Lord, with or without words, as you find most easy—but let your inmost heart be really full of desire! Be resolved about obtaining the blessing! Do as one did

the other night, who said within himself, "I am a lost soul, but I will never rise from the side of this bed till I find the Savior. I am determined to get forgiveness or die on my knees." He cried and groaned and won the day! We should not have liked to have heard his pitiful cries, for there was no beauty or elegance in his language and no music in his groans—but the Lord heard him and saved his soul!

"O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul," is a prayer most congruous to the situation and in every way *suitable* to it! Oh, that all prayers were as suitable as this! This, then, is the wisdom of every poor distressed soul in its time of trouble. It must, by a simple faith in Jesus, breathe out its desire at the cross and say, "Jesus, Savior, save me now, and deliver my soul."

III. Our third point is DELIVERANCE and for this I refer you to the 8th verse. This poor, pleading, doubting, trembling petitioner received *what he asked for*. He said, "O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul," and before long he sang, "You have delivered my soul." As the echo answers to the voice, so the Lord replied to his request. If you are asking for salvation with all your heart—with your eye on Christ's cross—you shall have it! If you cast yourself before Jesus and say to Him, "If I perish, I will perish at Your pierced feet," you shall not perish! If you sincerely cry for forgiveness, as the publican did, you shall go down to your house justified!

Note, next, that while he had what he asked for, *it came from Him of whom he asked it*—"You have delivered my soul from death." We delight to ascribe salvation wholly to our Triune God! Some brethren are a little cloudy in their talk about man's salvation. But when you get to the inner experience of all true believers, they will always tell you that they did *not* save themselves and they agree that it was not by their own will or merit that they were saved, but by the sovereign grace of God, alone. The unrighteous may gain deliverance from themselves, or their fellow men, but those whom the Holy Spirit convicts of sin must be delivered by the Lord Himself—nothing short of a divine salvation will do for them. "You have delivered my soul from death." Mine was a case in which none could help me but Yourself, my God. My sorrows demanded omnipotent cordials—only the blood of Jesus and the balm of the Holy Spirit could comfort me!

Note, again, that this blessing came consciously to him. "You *have* delivered my soul from death." He does not say, "I *hope* You have" but, "You have." "I know it, I am sure of it, I rejoice in it." And it is not, "I have shared the blessing in common with a great many and I hope that I have an interest in it." No, but, "You have delivered my soul from death. If there is not another saved man in the world, I am one." The faith which looks, alone, to Jesus is an appropriating grace and enables the soul to say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." As a dear young friend said to me last Monday night, when I was speaking to her about her soul, "I came to see, sir, that Christ loved me as much as though there was not another man or woman in the world, and laid His life down in my place, as much as if there was not another sinner that needed His blood to be shed. When I got Christ all to myself, then, I rejoiced in Him and now,"

she said, "I want everybody else to have Him." It is just so. We must get Him, ourselves, with a holy greediness that fences Him about all for ourselves, and then, we shall cultivate a large-hearted love for souls and long that every other person may know the same precious Christ. So the psalmist, you see, got what he asked for—it came from Him of whom he asked it—and it came consciously *to him*.

But I want you to notice one other thing. *He gained a great deal more than he asked for*. He prayed, "O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul," and God delivered his soul from death, his eyes from tears and his feet from falling. He asked for one thing, and he obtained it—and two other things besides—for it is our heavenly Father's way to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or even think. Blessed be His name!

He gained *deliverance from death,* for souls can die though they cannot cease to exist. They die when separated from God, as Adam's soul died in the day when he ate of the forbidden fruit—and as all souls are dead, until by union to God, they are quickened into spiritual life. Through the grace of God, David was delivered from the spiritual death which reigns within and the eternal death to which it leads.

His eyes were also cleared from tears. Who is not free from sorrow when he is free from the fear of the death penalty? Forgiveness has joy at its heel wherever it comes!

And then, having gained salvation and joy, the Lord gave him *stability*. Those feet that were so apt to slide were set fast and the fear of future apostasy was removed by the gracious securities which God gave to him that He would never leave him. Thus, he had a blessing for his soul, his eyes, and his feet—salvation, joy, and stability!

The last word to be said is this—*these same blessings can be had by* others. If I address any who are now passing through the terrible experience of David, or anything like it—or if I address any who are *not* passing through any such experience, but nevertheless, desire life everlasting—I would say to them, "Remember, the reason David was heard did not lie in his *prayer*, or in *himself*, but it lay in God!" Read the verse which follows my first text—the 5th verse, "Gracious is the Lord and righteous; yes, our God is merciful." *That* is why the Lord heard David's prayer—because He is gracious and He loves to show divine grace to sinners! It was also because He is righteous and therefore, keeps His promises. He has made a promise that He will hear prayer and He has said, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." And, therefore, in mercy and righteousness, He will hear us.

Remember, too, that if your distresses are like David's, *you may use the same prayer*, because you have the same promises. God's promises are not used up and spent so that they will not work for you. If a good meal is provided for half-a-dozen people and they eat it all up, and six more come afterwards, why, they must go without! But with God's promises, it is not so! They are fed upon by myriads and yet they remain the same! Ten thousand souls have fed upon a precious Christ and received what they needed from Him, and yet 10,000 more may come—

"Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood
Shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God
Is saved to sin no more."

Let us remember, then, that we have the same promises and the same God. Let the same prayer be offered by each unconverted one here—"O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul." God's answer to that is, "Believe on My Son, Jesus Christ. Trust Him wholly and your soul is delivered."—

"All your sins were laid upon Him,
Jesus bore them on the tree.
God who knew them laid them on Him,
And believing, you are free!"

Trust Him and you are delivered, for thus says the Lord, "I will deliver his soul from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." Turn your eyes to what Jesus Christ has done! Rest in His finished sacrifice and go your way rejoicing! May God the Eternal Spirit lead each of you poor sinners to that! And I would entreat you, when He does so, to come and let us know it. Do as the psalmist tells you by his example. Say, "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now, in the presence of all His people." Do not hide His love! Confess it to His glory, for the comfort of His people, for the encouragement of His minister and for the strengthening of His church! The Lord be with you, brethren, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 116.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—30, 138.

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RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH
NO. 1217

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 26, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Rightly dividing the word of truth."
2 Timothy 2:15.

TIMOTHY was to divide rightly the Word of God. Every Christian minister must do this if he would make full proof of his ministry and if he would be clear of the blood of his hearers at the last great day. Of the whole 20 years of my printed sermons, I can honestly say that this has been my aim—rightly to divide the Word of truth. Wherein I have succeeded, I magnify the name of the Lord. In which I have failed, I lament my faultiness. And now once more, we will try, again, and may God the Holy Spirit, without whose power nothing can be done aright, help us rightly to divide the Word of truth.

The expression is a very remarkable one because it bears so many phases of meaning. I do not think that any one of the figures by which I shall illustrate it will be at all strained, for they have been drawn from the text by most eminent expositors, and may be fairly taken as honest comments, even when they might be challenged as correct interpretations of the text. "Rightly dividing the word of truth" is our authorized version, but we leave it for a little to consider other renderings. Timothy was neither to mutilate, nor twist, nor torture, nor break in pieces the Word of God, nor keep on the outside of it, as those do who never touch the soul of a text, but rightly to divide it, as one taught of God to teach others.

I. The Vulgate version translates it—and with a considerable degree of accuracy—"Rightly HANDLING the word of truth." What is the right way, then, to handle the Word of truth? It is like a sword and *it was not meant to be played with*. That is not rightly to handle the gospel. It must be used in earnest and pushed home. Are you converted, my friends? Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Are you saved, or not? Swords are meant to cut and hack, wound and kill—and the Word of God is for pricking men in the heart and killing their sins. The Word of God is not committed to God's ministers to amuse men with its glitter, nor to charm them with the jewels in its hilt, but to conquer their souls for Jesus! Remember, dear hearers, if the preacher does not push you to this—that you shall be converted, or he will know the reason why. If he does not drive you to this—that you shall either willfully reject, or cheerfully accept Christ—he has not yet known how rightly to handle the great "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Now, then, where are you personally at this moment? Are you unbelievers, upon whom the wrath of God abides, or

are you believers who may lay claim to that gracious word, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes in Me has everlasting life"? Oh that the Lord would make His all-discerning Word go round this place and strike at every conscience and lay bare every heart with its mighty power!

He that rightly handles the Word of God will *never use it to defend men in their sins*, but to slay their sins! If there is a professing Christian here who is living in known sin, shame upon him! And if there is a non-Christian man who is living in sin, let his conscience upbraid him! What will he do in that day when Christ comes to judge the hearts of men? Remember, the books shall be opened and every thought shall be read out before an assembled universe! I desire to handle the Word of God so that no man may ever find an excuse in my ministry for his living without Christ and living in sin, but may know clearly that sin is a deadly evil and unbelief the sure destroyer of the soul! He has, indeed, been made to handle the Word aright who plunges it like a two-edged sword into the very heart of sin!

The gospel ought *never to be used for frightening sinners from Christ*. I believe it is so handled sometimes. Sublime doctrines are rolled like rocks in the sinner's way and dark experiences set up as a standard of horror which must be reached before a man may believe in Jesus—but to rightly handle the Word of Life is to frighten men *to* Christ rather than *from* Him—yes, to woo them to Him by the sweet assurance that He will cast out none that come! That He asks no preparations of them, but if they come at once, as they are, He will assuredly receive them. Have I not handled the Word of truth in this way hundreds of times in this house? Has it not been a great magnet attracting sinners? As a magnet has two poles, and with one pole it repels, so, no doubt, the truth of God repels the prejudiced, rebellious heart—and thus, it is a savor of death unto death. But our object is so to handle it that the attractive pole may come into operation through the power of the Spirit of God—and men may be drawn to Christ.

Moreover, if we rightly handle the Word of God, *we shall not preach it so as to send Christians into a sleepy state*. That is easily done. We may preach the consolations of the gospel till each professor feels, "I am safe enough. There is no need to watch, no need to fight, no need for any exertion whatever! My battle is fought, my victory is won. I have only to fold my arms and go to sleep." No, no! This is not how we handle the Word of God, but our cry is, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. Reckon not yourselves to have attained unto perfection, but forget the things that are behind, and reach forward to that which is before, looking unto Jesus." This is rightly to handle the Word of God.

And, oh, beloved, there is one thing that I dread above all others—that I should ever handle the Word of God *so as to persuade some of you that you are saved when you are not*. To collect a large number of professors together is one thing. But to have a large number of true saints built to-

gether in Christ is quite another. To get up a whirl of excitement and to have people influenced by that excitement so that they think, full surely, that they are converted, has been done a great many times. But the bubble, has, by-and-by, vanished. The balloon has been filled until it has burst. God save us from that! We want sure work—lasting work—a work of divine grace in the heart. If you are not converted, do not pretend that you are. If you have not known what it is to be brought down to see your own nothingness and then to be built up by the power of the Spirit upon Christ as the only foundation, O, remember that whatever is built upon the quicksand will fall with a crash in the hour of trial! Do not be satisfied with anything short of a deep foundation, cut in the solid rock of the work of Jesus Christ. Ask for real vital godliness, for nothing else will serve your turn at the last great day. Now, this is rightly to handle the Word of God—to use it to push the truth home upon men for their present conversion, to use it for the striking down of their sins—to use it to draw men to Christ, to use it to arouse sinners and to use it to produce, not mere profession, but a real work of grace in the hearts of men. May the Holy Spirit teach all the ministers of Christ after this fashion to handle the two-edged sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

II. But now, secondly, my text has another meaning. It has an idea in it which I can only express by a figure. "Rightly dividing or STRAIGHT CUTTING." A plowman stands here with his plow and he plows right along from this end of the field to the other, making a straight furrow. And so Paul would have Timothy make a straight furrow right through the Word of truth. I believe there is no preaching that God will ever accept but that which goes decidedly through the whole line of truth from end to end, is always thorough, honest, and downright. As the truth is a straight line, so must our handling of the truth be straightforward and honest, without shifts or tricks. There are two or three furrows which I have labored hard to plow. One is the furrow of *free grace*. "Salvation is of the Lord"—He begins it, He carries it on, He completes it. Salvation is not of man, neither by man, but of grace alone. Grace in election, grace in redemption, grace in effectual calling, grace in final perseverance, grace in conferring the perfection of glory—it is all grace from beginning to end! If we say, at any time, anything which is really contrary to this distinct testimony that salvation is of grace, do not believe us! This furrow must be plowed fairly, plainly, and beyond all mistake. Sinner, you cannot be saved by any merit, penance, preparation, or feeling of your own! The Lord, alone, must save you as a work of gratis mercy, not because you deserve it, but because He wills to do it to magnify His abundant love. That is the straight furrow of the Word.

We endeavor always to make a straight furrow upon the matter of *human depravity*—to preach that man is fallen, that every part and passion of his nature is perverted, that he has gone astray altogether, is sick from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet—yes, is dead in trespasses and sins, and corrupt before God. "There is none that does good, no, not one." I have noticed some preachers plowing this furrow very crookedly,

for they say, "There are still some very fine points about man and many good things in him which only need developing and educating." You may have read, in the history of Mr. Whitefield's time, what a howl was made at him because he once said that man was half beast and half devil. I do not think he ever got nearer the truth than when he said that—only I would beg the beast's pardon—for a beast would scarcely become so evil and vile as human nature becomes when it is left alone to fully develop itself! O pride of human nature, we plow right over you! The hemlock stands in your field and must be cut up by the roots. Your weeds smile like fair flowers, but the plow must go right through them till all human beauty is shown to be a painted Jezebel, and all human glorying a bursting bubble. God is everything, man is nothing! God in His grace saves man, but man by his sin utterly ruins himself until God's grace interposes. I like to plow a straight furrow here.

Another straight furrow is that of *faith*. We are sent to tell men that he that believes and is baptized shall be saved, and our duty is to put it so. "Salvation is not of works"—works is not the furrow. Not of prayers—that is not the furrow. Not of feelings—that is not the gospel arrow. Not of preparations and amendments and reforms—but by *faith* in Jesus Christ. He that believes on Him is not condemned. As we begin the new life by faith, we must abide in it by faith. We are not to be saved by faith up to a certain point and then to rely upon ourselves. Having begun in the gospel, we are not to be perfected by the law. "The just shall live by faith." We live by faith at the wicket gate and we live by faith until we enter into our eternal rest. *Believe*!—that is the grand gospel precept and we trust we have never gone out of this furrow, but have tried to plow right across the gospel field from end to end, crying, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth, for Jehovah is God, and beside Him there is none else."

Another furrow which some do not much like to plow, but which must be distinctly marked if a man is an honest plowman for God, is that of *repentance*. Sinner, you and your sins must part! You have been married long and you have had a merry time of it, perhaps, but you must part. You and your sins must separate, or you and your God will never come together! You may not keep *one* sin. They must all be given up! They must be brought out like the Canaanite kings from the cave and hanged up before the sun. Not one darling must be spared. You must forsake them, loathe them, abhor them, and ask the Lord to overcome them. Do you not know that the furrow of repentance runs right through the Christian's life? He sins, and as long as he sins, he repents of his sin. The child of God cannot *love* sin—he must loathe it as long as he sees any of it in existence!

There is the furrow of *holiness*. That is the next turn the plowman takes. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." We have preached salvation by grace, but we do not preach salvation to those who still continue in sin. The children of God are a holy people—washed, purged, sanctified, and made zealous for good works. He who talks about faith,

and has no works to prove that his faith is a *living* faith, lies to himself and lies before God. It is faith that saves us, not works—but the faith that saves us always *produces* works. It renews the heart, changes the character, influences the motives, and is the means in the hand of God of making the man a new creature in Christ Jesus. No nonsense about it, sirs—you may be baptized and re-baptized, you may attend to sacraments, or you may believe in an orthodox creed—but you will be damned if you live in sin. You may become a deacon, or an elder, or a minister, if you dare, but there is no salvation for any man who still harbors his sins. "The wages of sin is death"—death to professors as well as to non-professors. If they hug their sins in secret, God will reveal those sins in public and condemn them according to the strict justice of His law. These are the furrows we have tried to plow—deep, sharp cut and straight. O that God might plow them, Himself, in all your hearts, that you may know, experimentally, how the truth of God is rightly divided!

III. There is a third meaning to the text. "Rightly dividing the word of truth" is, as some think, an expression taken from the priests dividing the sacrifices. When they had a lamb or a sheep, a ram or a bullock to offer, after they had killed it, it was cut in pieces, carefully and properly. And it requires no little skill to find out where the joints are, so as to cut up an animal discreetly. Now, the Word of truth has to be taken to pieces wisely—it is not to be hacked or torn as by a wild beast—but rightly divided. There has to be DISCRIMINATION AND DISSECTION. It is a great part of a minister's duty to be able to dissect the gospel—to lay one piece there, and another there, and preach with clearness, distinction, and discrimination.

Every gospel minister must divide between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. It is a very nice point, that, and many fail to discern it well, but it must always be kept clear, or great mischief will be done. Confusion worse confounded follows upon confusing grace and law. There is the covenant of works—"This do, and you shall live," but its voice is not that of the covenant of grace which says, "Hear and your soul shall live." "You shall, for I will"—that is the covenant of grace. It is a covenant of pure promise unalloyed by terms and conditions. I have heard people put it thus—"Believers will be saved if, from this time forth, they are faithful to grace given." That smells of the covenant of works! "God will love you"—says another—"*if you*—." Ah, the moment you get an *"if"* in it, it is the covenant of works and the gospel has evaporated! Oil and water will sooner mix than merit and grace! When you find the covenant of works anywhere, what are you to do with it? Why, do what Abraham did and what Sarah demanded, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac."

If you are a child of the free-grace promise, do not suffer the Hagar and Ishmael of legal bondage and carnal hope to live in your house. Out with them! You should have nothing to do with them. Let law and gospel keep their proper places. The law is master to bring us *to* Christ, but

when we have come to Christ, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. Let the law principle go its way to work conviction in sinners and destroy their ill-grounded hopes, but you abide in Christ Jesus even as you have received Him. If you are to be saved by works, then it is not of grace, otherwise work is no more work. And if saved by grace, then it is not of human merit, otherwise grace is no more grace. To be absolutely clear, here, is of the first importance, for on the rocks of legality many a soul has been cast away.

We need, also, to keep up a clear distinction between the efforts of nature and the work of grace. It is commendable for men to do all they can to improve themselves, and everything by which people are made more sober, more honest, more frugal, better citizens, better husbands, better wives is a good thing. But that is nature and not grace. Reformation is not regeneration. "You must be born again," still stands for the good as well as for the bad. To be made a new creature in Christ Jesus is as necessary for the moral as for the debauched, for when flesh has done its best, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh"—and men must be born of the Spirit or they cannot understand spiritual things, or enter into heaven. I have always tried to keep up this distinction and I trust none of you will ever mistake the efforts of nature for the works of divine grace. Do what you can for human reformation, for whatever things are honest and of good repute you are to foster, but still, *never* put the most philanthropic plan, or the most elevating system in the place of the work of sovereign grace, for, if you do, you will do 10 times as much mischief as you can possibly do good. We must rightly divide the Word of truth.

It is always well, too, for Christian men to be able to distinguish one truth of God from another. Let the knife penetrate between the joints of the work of Christ *for* us and the work of the Holy Spirit *in* us. Justification, by which the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, is one blessing. Sanctification, by which we, ourselves, are made personally righteous, is another blessing. I have known some describe sanctification as a sort of foundation, or at least a buttress for the work of justification. Now, no man is justified because he is sanctified—he is justified because he believes in Him that justifies the ungodly. Sanctification *follows* justification. It is the work of the Spirit of God in the soul of a believer, who, first of all, was justified by believing in Jesus while as yet he was unsanctified. Give Jesus Christ all the glory for His great and perfect work, and remember that you are perfect in Christ Jesus and accepted in the Beloved. But, at the same time, give glory to the Holy Spirit and remember that you are not yet perfect in holiness, but that the Spirit's work is to be carried on and will be carried on all the days of your life.

One other point of rightly dividing should never be forgotten—we must always distinguish between the root and the fruit. He is a very poor botanist who does not know a bulb from a bud—but I believe that there are some Londoners who do not know which are roots and which are fruits, so little have they seen of anything growing! And I am sure there are some theologians who hardly know which is the cause and which is the

effect in spiritual things. Putting the cart before the horse is a very absurd thing, but many do it. Hear how people will say—"If I could feel joy in the Lord, I would believe." Yes, that is the cart before the horse, for joy is the *result* of faith, not the *reason* for it! "But I want to feel a great change of heart, and then I will believe." Just so—you wish to make the fruit the root. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," that is the root of the matter! Change of life and joy in the Lord will spring up as gracious fruits of faith and not otherwise. When will you discriminate?

Thus, I have given you three versions of my text—rightly handling, straightly furrowing, and wisely discriminating.

IV. The next interpretation of the apostle's expression is practically CUTTING OUT the Word for holy uses. This is the sense given by Chrysostom. I will show you what I mean here. Suppose I have a skin of leather before me and I want to make a saddle. I take a knife and I begin cutting out the shape. I do not want those parts which are dropping off on the right and round this corner—they are very good leather—but I cannot, just now, make use of them. I have to cut out my saddle and I make that my one concern. Or, suppose I have to make a pair of reins out of the leather. I must take my knife round and work away with one object, keeping clearly before me what I am aiming at. The preacher, to be successful, must also have his wits about him. And when he has the Bible before him he must use those portions which will have a bearing upon his grand aim. He must make use of the material laid ready to his hand in the Bible. Every portion of the Word of God is very blessed and exceedingly profitable, but it may not happen to be connected with the preacher's immediate subject and, therefore, he leaves it to be considered another time. And, though some will upbraid him for it, he is much too sensible to feel bound to preach all the doctrines of the Bible in each sermon! He wants to have souls saved and Christians quickened and, therefore, he does not forever pour out the vials and blow the trumpets of prophecy. Some hearers are crazy after the mysteries of the future. Well, there are two or three brothers in London who are always trumpeting and vialing. Go and hear them if you want to! I have something else to do. I confess, I am not sent to decipher the apocalyptic symbols—my errand is humbler, but equally as useful—I am sent to bring souls to Jesus Christ!

There are preachers who are always dealing with the deep things, the *very* deep things. For them the coral caves of mystery and the far descending shafts of metaphysics have a mighty charm. I have no quarrel with their tastes, but I do not think the Word of God was given us to be a riddle book. To me, the *plain* gospel is the part which I cut out and rightly cut out of the Word of God. There is a soul that needs to know how to find peace with God. Some other brother can tell him where predestination falls in with free agency, I do not pretend to know. But I do know that faith in Jesus brings peace to the heart. My business is to bring forth that which will save souls, build up saints and set Christians to work for Christ. I leave the mysteries, not because I despise them, but

because the times demand that we, first and above all other things, seek the souls of men! Some truths of God press to be heard. They must be heard now, or men will be lost. The other truths, they can hear tomorrow or by-and-by, but *now,* escape from hell and fitness for heaven are their immediate business! Fancy the angels sitting down with Lot and his daughters, inside Sodom, and discussing predestination with them, or explaining the limits of free agency! No, no! They cry, "Come along," and they take them by the arm and lead them out, saying, "Flee, flee, flee, for fire is coming down from heaven and this city is to be destroyed!"

This is what the preacher has to do—leaving certain parts of the truth of God for other times, he is now rightly dividing the Word of truth when he brings out that which is of pressing importance. In the Bible, there are some things that are essential, without which a man cannot be saved at all. There are other things which are important, but still, men are saved, notwithstanding their ignorance of those things. Is it not clear that the essentials must have prominence? Every truth ought to be preached in its turn and place, but we must never give the first place to a second truth, or push that to the front which was meant to be in the background of the picture. "We preach Christ," said the apostle, "Christ and Him crucified." And I believe that if the preacher is rightly to divide the Word, he will say to the sinner, "Sinner, Christ died, Christ rose again, Christ intercedes. Look to Him. As for the difficult questions and nice points, leave them for awhile. You shall discuss them by-and-by, so far as they are profitable to you, but just now, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is the main matter." The preacher must, thus, separate the vital from the secondary, the practical from the speculative, and the pressing and immediate from that which may be lawfully delayed. And in that sense, he will rightly divide the Word of truth.

V. I have given you four meanings. Now, I will give you another, leaving out some I might have mentioned. One thing the preacher has to do is to ALLOT TO EACH ONE HIS PORTION. And here the figure changes. According to Calvin, the intention of the Spirit, here, is to represent one who is the steward of the house and has to apportion food to the different members of the family. He has rightly to divide the loaves so as not to give the little children and the babes all the crust. He has to rightly supply each one's necessities, not giving the strong men milk, nor the babes hard diet—not casting the children's bread to the dogs, nor giving the swine's husks to the children—but placing before each his own portion. Let me try and do it. Child of God, your portion is the whole Word of God. Every promise in it is yours! Take it. Feed on it. Christ is yours. God is yours. The Holy Spirit is yours. This world is yours and worlds to come. Time is yours. Eternity is yours. Life is yours. Death is yours. Everlasting glory is yours! There is your portion! It is very sweet to give you your royal meat. The Lord gives you a good appetite. Feed on it! Feed on it!

Sinner, you who believe not in Jesus, none of this is yours! While you remain as you are, only the threats are yours. If you refuse to believe in Jesus, neither this life nor the next is yours, nor time, nor eternity. You

have nothing good. O, how dreadful is your portion now, for the wrath of God abides on you! O, that you were wise, that your character might be changed, for until it is, we dare not flatter you. There is not a promise for you, nor a single approving sentence! You get your food to eat and your raiment to put on, but even that is given to you by the abounding long-suffering of God and it may become a curse to you unless you repent. I am sorry to bring you such a portion, but I must be honest with you. That is all that I can give you. God has said it—it is an awful sentence—"I will *curse* their *blessings*." O, sinner, the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked!

We have also to divide a portion to the *mourners*, and O, how sweet a task that is, to say to those that mourn in Zion that the Lord will give them beauty for ashes. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." The Lord will restore peace unto His mourners! Fear not, neither be dismayed, for the Lord will help you! But when we have given the mourners their sweet meats, we have to turn round upon the *hypocrites* and say to them, "You may hang your heads like bulrushes. You may rend your garments and pretend to fast, but the Lord, who knows your heart, will suddenly come and unmask you! And if you are not sincere before Him—if you are weighed in the balances and found wanting—He will deal out the gall of bitterness to you forever! For his mourners, there is mercy, but for the deceiver and the hypocrite, there is judgment without mercy." It is a very pleasant thing, moreover, to deal out a portion to the *seeker*—when we say, "He that seeks finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened." "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden," says Christ, "for I will give you rest." Take your portion and be glad!

We have to turn round and say to others who *think* they are seekers, but *who are delaying*, "How long will you wait between two opinions?" How is it that you continually hesitate and refuse to believe in Jesus, and stay in the condition of unbelief, when the gospel mandate is, "Believe—believe now and live"? So we have to give to one comfort, to another counsel—to one reproof, to another encouragement. We have to give to one the invitation—to another the warning. This is to rightly divide the Word of truth.

Yes, and sometimes God enables His servants to give the Word very remarkably to some men. I believe that if I were to tell a few of the things which have happened to me during the last 21 years, they would not be believed. Or if I were to tell you of passages of history which are known to me that have occurred in this Tabernacle to people who have come here and to whom I have spoken the exact Word, not knowing them for a moment, the facts would sound like fictions. I will give you one instance. Some of you may remember my preaching from the text, "What if your father answers you roughly?" There came into the vestry, after that sermon, a venerable Christian gentleman, bringing with him a young foreigner whom he was anxious to satisfy upon one point. He said, "Sir, I want you kindly to answer this question—have you seen me, concerning this young gentlemen?" "No, sir, certainly not," I said. And assuredly,

though I knew the gentleman who addressed me, he had never spoken to me about the foreign stranger whose very existence was, up to that moment, unknown to me. Said he, "This young gentleman is almost persuaded to be a Christian. His father is of quite another faith and worships other gods. And our young friend knows that if he becomes a Christian, he will lose his father's love. I said to him, when he conversed with me, come down and hear Mr. Spurgeon this morning. "Here he came, and your text was, 'What if your father answers you roughly?' Now, have you ever heard a word from me about this young gentleman?" "No, never," I said. "Well," said the young man, "it is the most extraordinary thing I ever heard in my life." I could only say, "I trust it is the voice of God to your soul. God knows how to guide His servants to utter the Word most fitted to bless men."

Some time ago, a town missionary had, in his district, a man who never would suffer any Christian person to come into his house. The missionary was warned by many that he would get a broken head if he ventured on a visit. He, therefore, kept from the house, though it troubled his conscience to pass it by. He made a matter of prayer of it, and one morning, he boldly ventured into the lion's den and the man said, "What have you come here for?" "Well, sir," he said, "I have been conversing with people in all the houses along here, but I have passed you by because I heard you objected to it. But somehow I thought it looked cowardly to avoid you and therefore I have called." "Come in," the man said. "Sit down, sit down. Now, you are going to talk to me about the Bible. Perhaps you do not know much about it yourself. I am going to ask you a question, and if you can answer me, you shall come again. If you do not answer it, I will bundle you downstairs. Now," he said, "do you understand me?" "Yes," said the other, "I do understand you." "Well, then," he said, "this is the question—where do you find the word, '*girl,*' in the Bible, and how many times do you find it?" The city missionary said, "The word, 'girl,' occurs only once in the Bible, and that is in the Book of Joel, the third chapter and the third verse. 'They sold a girl for wine.'" "You are right," he said, "but I would not have believed you knew it, or else I would have asked you some other question. You may come again." "But," said the missionary, "I should like you to know how I came to know it. This very morning I was praying for direction from God, and when I was reading my morning chapter, I came upon this passage, 'And they sold a girl for wine,' and I took down my Concordance to see whether the word, 'girl,' was to be found anywhere else. I found that the word, 'girls,' occurs in the passage, 'There shall be girls and boys playing in the streets of Jerusalem,' but the word did not occur as, 'girl,' anywhere but in Joel." The result, however, of that story, however odd it seems, was that the missionary was permitted to call and the man took an interest in his visits. And the whole family were the better—the man and his wife, and one of his children becoming members of a Christian church some time afterwards.

What an extraordinary thing it seems, yet I can assure you that such extraordinary things are as commonplaces in my experience. God does help His servants rightly to divide the Word, that is to say, to allot a special portion to each special case, so that it comes upon the man as if everything about him was known. Before I came to London, a man met me one Sunday, in a dreadful state of rage. He vowed he would horsewhip me for bullying him from the pulpit. What had I said, I asked. "What have you said? You looked me in the face and said, 'What more can God do for you? Shall He give you a good wife? You have had one—you have killed her by bad treatment! You have just got another and you are likely to do the same by her.'" "Well," I said, "did you kill your first wife by your bad treatment?" "They say so, but I was married on Saturday," said he. "Did you not know it?" "No, I did not, I assure you," I replied. "I have no knowledge whatever of your family matters, and I am sure I wish you joy with your new wife." He cooled down a great deal, but I believe that I had struck the nail on the head that time—that he had killed his wife with his unkindness, and he scarcely liked to bring his new wife to the place of worship to be told of it. The cap fit him. And if any cap fits you, I pray you wear it, for so far from shrinking from being personal, I do assure you, I *try* to be as personal as I can, for I long to see the Word go home to every man's conscience, and convict him and make him tremble before God and confess his sin and forsake it!

VI. You must give me a few more minutes while I take the last point, which is this. Rightly to divide the Word of truth means to TELL EACH MAN WHAT HIS LOT AND HERITAGE WILL BE IN ETERNITY. Just as when Canaan was conquered, it was divided by lot among the tribes, so the preacher has to tell of Canaan, that happy land, but he has to also tell of the land of darkness and of death-shade, and to let each man know where his last abode will be. You know it. You who come here know it. Need I repeat a story that we have gone over and over a thousand times? As many as believe in Jesus and are renewed in heart, and are kept by the grace of God through faith unto salvation, shall inherit eternal life. But as for those who believe not on God, who reject His Son, who abide in their sins—there remains nothing for them but, "a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation." "The wicked shall be turned into hell with all the nations that forget God." "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." "Beware," says God—"Beware, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver." O, the wrath to come! The wrath to come!

Believer, there is your portion—in the blessed land! Sinner, unless you repent, there is your portion—in the land of darkness and of weeping—of wailing and of gnashing of teeth! I take a religious newspaper from America and the last copy I had of it bore on it these words at the end, in good large type, printed in a practical, business-like, American way—"If you do not want to have this paper, discontinue it NOW. If you wish to have it for the year 1876, send your subscription NOW. If you have any complaint against it, send your complaint NOW. If you have removed, send a

notice of your change of residence NOW." There was a big "NOW" at the end of every sentence! As I read it, I thought, well, that is right. That is common sense. And it struck me that I would say to you on this last Sunday night of the year, if you wish to forsake your sins, forsake them NOW. If you would have mercy from God through Jesus Christ, believe on Him NOW. What fitter time than before the dying year is gone—NOW, NOW, NOW?

In that very paper, I read a story concerning Messrs. Moody and Sankey on the same point. The story is that while they were preaching in Edinburgh, there was a man sitting opposite to them who was very deeply interested, and was drinking it all in. There was a pause in the service and the man went out with his friend, but when he reached the door he stopped and his friend said, "Come away, Jamie." "No," he said, "I will go back. I came here to get good to my soul and I have not taken it all in yet, I must go back again." He went back, and sat in his old place and listened again. The Lord blessed him. He found Christ and so found salvation. Being a miner, he went down the pit the next day, to his work, and a mass of rock fell on him. He was taken out, but he could not recover. He said to the man who was helping him out, "O, Andrew, I am so glad it was all settled last night. Oh, mon," said he, "it was all settled last night." Now, I hope those people who were killed in the railway accident on Christmas Eve could say—"It was all settled the night before." What a blessed thing it will be for you, if you should meet with an accident tomorrow, to say, "Blessed be God, it was all settled last night. I gave any heart to Jesus, I yielded myself to His divine love and mercy, and I am saved." O Holy Spirit, grant it may be so, and You shall have the praise. Amen and amen!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Timothy 2.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—1,041, 960.

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A VOICE FROM HEAVEN
NO. 1219

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

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from now on: Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."
Revelation 14:12, 13.

THE text speaks of a voice from heaven which said, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." The witness of that voice is not needed upon every occasion, for even the most common observer is compelled to feel, concerning many of the righteous, that their deaths are blessed. Balaam, with all his moral shortsightedness, could say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." That is the case when death comes in peaceful fashion. The man has lived a calm, godly, consistent life. He has lived as long as he could well have wished to live and, in dying, he sees his children and his children's children gathered around his bed. What a fine picture the old man makes, as he sits up with that snowy head supported by snowy pillows. Hear him as he tells his children that goodness and mercy have followed him all the days of his life and now he is going to dwell in the house of the Lord forever! See the seraphic smile which lights up his face as he bids them farewell and assures them that he already hears the harpers harping with their harps—bids them stop those tears and weep not for him, but for themselves—charges them to follow him so far as he has followed Christ and to meet him at the right hand of the Judge in the day of His appearing. Then the old man, almost without a sigh, leans back and is present with the Lord!—

"Heaven waits not the last moment;
Owns her friends on this side death,
And points them out to men;
A lecture silent but of sovereign power!
To vice, confusion—and to virtue peace."

Even the blind bat's-eyed worldling can see that, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord" in such a fashion as that! Nor is it difficult to perceive that this is the case in many other instances. We have, ourselves, known several good men and women who were afraid of death and were, much of their lifetime, subject to bondage. But they went to bed and fell asleep and never woke again in this world. And as far as appearances go, they could never have known so much as one single pang in departure, but fell asleep among mortals to awake amid the angels! Truly, such gentle loosing of the cable, such fording of Jordan dry shod, such ascents of the celestial hills with music at every step are desirable beyond measure!

And we need no voice out of the excellent glory to proclaim that blessed are the dead, who in such a case, die in the Lord.

But that was not the picture which John had before his mind. It was quite another—a picture grim and black to mortal eyes. The sounds which meet the ear are not those of music, nor the whispered consolations of friends, but quite the reverse. All is painful, terrible, and the very opposite of blessed, so far as strikes the eyes and ears. Therefore, it became necessary that there should be a voice from heaven to say, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." I will give you the picture. The man of God is on the rack. They are turning that infernal machine with all their might. They have dragged every bone from its place. They have exercised their tortures till every nerve of his body cries with agony! He is flung into a dark and loathsome dungeon and left there to recover strength enough to be led in derision through the streets. Upon his head, they have placed a cap painted with devils and all his garments they have bedizened with the resemblance of fiends and flames of hell. And now, with a shaveling priest on each side, holding up before him a superstitious emblem, and bidding him adore the Virgin or worship the cross, the good man, loaded with chains, goes through the streets, say of Madrid or Antwerp, to the place prepared for his execution. "An act of faith," they call it—an *auto da fe*—and an act of heroic faith it is, indeed, when the man of God takes his place at the stake, in his shirt, with an iron chain about his loins, and is fastened to the stake where he must stand and burn "quick to the death." Can you see him as they kindle the wood beneath him and the flames begin to consume his quivering flesh till he is all ablaze and burning—burning without a cry—though fiercely tormented by the fire? Now assuredly is that voice from heaven needed, and you can hear it, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord"—blessed even when they die like this! "Here is the patience of the saints" and in the esteem of angels and of glorified spirits, such a death may, under many aspects, be adjudged to be more blessed than the peaceful deathbed of the saint who had some fellowship with Jesus, but was not made to drink of His cup and to be baptized with His baptism, as to die a painful and shameful death as a witness for the truth. It must have been a dreadful thing to watch the rabble rousers hurrying to Smithfield, to stand there and see the burning of the saints. It would have been a more fearful thing, still, if possible, to have been in the dungeons of the low countries and seen the Anabaptists put to death in secret. In a dungeon dark and pestilential, there is placed a huge vat of water—and the faithful witness to Scriptural baptism is drowned—drowned for following the Lamb where ever He goes! Drowned alone—where no eyes could pity and no voice from out of the crowd could shout a word of help and comfort. Men hear only the coarse jests of the murderers who have given the dipper his last dip—but the ear of faith hears ringing through the dungeon, the voice, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." True, through the connection of their names with a fanatic band, these holy ancestors of ours have gained scant honor *here*, yet their record is on high! Blessed they are and blessed they shall be! Where ever on this earth, whether among the snows of Piedmont's valleys or in the fair fields of France, saints have

died by sword or famine, or fire or massacre, for the testimony of Jesus, because they would not bear the mark of the beast either in their forehead or in their hand, this voice is heard sounding out of the third heavens, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

It matters not, my brethren, *where* they die, who die in the Lord! It may be that they have not the honor of martyrdom in man's esteem, but yet are witnesses for the Lord in poverty and pain. Here is the patience and here, also, is the blessedness of the saints. Yonder poor girl lies in an attic, where the stars look between the tiles, and the moon gleams on the ragged hangings of the pallet where she largely suffers and without a murmur, gradually dissolves into death. However obscure and unknown she may be, she has been kept from the great transgression. Tempted sorely, she has yet held fast her purity and her integrity. Her prayers, unheard by others, have gone up before the Lord and she dies in the Lord, saved through Jesus Christ. None will preach her funeral sermon, but she shall not miss that voice from heaven, saying, "Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

We repeat it, it matters not where you die nor in what condition—if you are in the Lord, and die in the Lord—right blessed are you!

Now, it is quite certain that very soon every one of us must leave this world. We know that we are no more immortal than our fellow men. Though by a sad piece of imposition upon ourselves, we count all men mortal but ourselves, right surely mortal we are! And each one of us shall, in due time, pass away out of this world. The saints, themselves, must die, though to them death is far different than to sinners. It is greatly wise to be ready for our undressing, prepared for the sweet sleep in Jesus. And if we are not in Christ, it is all the more imperative upon us to consider our latter end that we rush not forward in the dark. I therefore want, for a few minutes only, to disengage your mind from the too abundant snares of this world and the slavery of human cares, that you may look across the border into the great future so surely yours, perhaps so *nearly* yours. Oh, that you might be helped to prepare for that future, that by such preparation, through divine grace, you may be numbered among the blessed who die in the Lord!

First, we shall briefly *describe their character*, then mention *the rest* which constitutes their blessedness, and conclude by meditating upon *the reward*, which is a further part of that blessedness.

I. First, then, let us describe THE CHARACTER. "Here is the patience of *the saint*s." To be blessed when we die, we *must* be saints. By nature, we are *sinners* and by divine grace, we must become saints if we would enter heaven, for it is the land of saints and none but saints can ever pass its frontiers. Since *death* does not change character, we must be made saints here below if we are to be saints above. We have come to misuse the term, "saint," and apply it only to some few of God's people. What does it mean but this—holy? Holy men and holy women—these are saints! It is not *Saint* Peter and *Saint* John merely—YOU are a saint, dear brother, if you live unto the Lord. You are a saint, my sister, however obscure your name, if you keep the Lord's way and walk before Him in sincere obedience. We must be saints—and in order to be this, we must be

renewed in spirit, for we are sinners by nature—we must, in fact, be born again. All unholy and unclean, we are by nature nothing else but sin—and we must be created anew by the power of the Holy Spirit, or else holiness will never dwell in us. Our loves must be changed so that we no longer love evil things, but delight only in that which is true, generous, kind, upright, pure, and godlike. We must be changed in every faculty and power of our nature by that same hand which first made us. And across our brows must be written these words, "Holiness unto the Lord."

The word, *saint*, denotes not merely the pure in *character*, but those who are set apart unto God—dedicated ones, sanctified by being devoted to holy uses—by being, in fact, consecrated to God alone. My dear hearer, do you belong to God? Do you live to glorify Jesus? Can you honestly put your hand on your heart and say, "Yes, I belong to Him who bought me with His blood and I endeavor, by His grace, to live as He would have me live. I am devoted to His honor, loving my fellow men and loving my Lord, endeavoring to be like He is in all things"? You must be such, for, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

"But how am I to attain to holiness?" You cannot rise to it except by divine strength. The Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier. Jesus, who is our Justifier, is also made unto us sanctification and if we, by faith, lay hold on Him, we shall find in Him all that we need. Let this be a searching matter with everyone here present, as I desire to make it with myself—and may God grant we may be numbered with the saints!

But the glorified are also described in our text as *patient* ones—"Here is the *patience* of the saints," or, if you choose to render it differently, you may lawfully do so—"Here is the *endurance* of the saints." Those who are to be crowned in heaven must bear the cross on earth. "No cross, no crown," is still most true. Many would be saints if everybody would encourage them. But as soon as a hard word is spoken, they are offended. They would go to heaven, if they could travel there amidst the hosannas of the multitude, but when they hear the cry of, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," straightway they desert the Man of Nazareth, for they have no intention to share His cross, or to be despised and rejected of men. The true saints of God are prepared to endure scoffing, jeering, and scorning—they accept this cross of Christ without murmuring, remembering Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself. They know that their brethren who went before, "Resisted unto blood, striving against sin," and as they have not yet come to that point, they count it foul scorn that they should be ashamed or confounded in minor trials, let their adversaries do what they may. Those who are to sing Christ's praise in heaven must, first, have been willing to bear Christ's shame below! They must be numbered with Him in humiliation, or they cannot expect to be partakers with Him in glory. And now, dear brethren, how is it with us? Are we willing to be reproached for Christ's glory? Can we bear the sarcasm of the wise? Can we bear the jest of the witty? Are we willing to be pointed at as Puritanical, conscientious, and precise? Do we dare to be singular when to be singular is to be right? If we can do this, by God's grace, let us further question ourselves. Could we endure this ordeal if its intensity were increased? Suppose it came to something

worse—to the thumbscrew or the rack—could we bear it, then? I sometimes fear that many professors would cut a sorry figure if persecuting times should come, for I observe that to be excluded from what is called, "society," is a great grievance to many modern Christians! When they settle in any place, their inquiry is not, "Where can I hear the gospel?" but, "Which is the most fashionable place of worship?" And the question with regard to their children is not, "Where will they have Christian associations?" but, "How can I introduce them to society?" Introduction to society frequently being an introduction to temptation. and the commencement of a life of levity! Oh, that all Christians could scorn the soft witcheries of the world, for, if they cannot, they may be sure that they will not bear its fiery breath when, like an oven, persecution comes forth to try the saints! God grant us grace to have the patience of the saints—that patience of the saints which will cheerfully suffer loss rather than do a wrong thing in business! God grant us that patience of the saints which will pine in poverty sooner than yield a principle though a kingdom were at stake! That patience of the saints which dreads not being unfashionable, if the right is reckoned so! That patience of the saints which courts no man's smile and fears no man's frown—but can endure all things for Jesus' sake and is resolved to do so! Can you cleave to your Lord when the many turn aside? Can you witness that He has the living Word and none upon earth beside? Can you watch with Him when all forsake Him and stand by Him when He is the butt of ribald jest and scorn? Can you bear the sneer of science, falsely so called, and the politer sarcasm of those who say they "doubt," but mean that they utterly disbelieve? Blessed is that *preacher* who shall be true to Christ in these evil days! Blessed is that church member who shall follow Christ's Word through the mire and through the slough, over the hill and down the dale, caring for nothing but to be true to His Master! This must be our resolve! If we are to win the glory, we must be faithful unto death. God make us so! "Here is the patience of the saints"—it comes not by nature—it is the gift of the grace of God.

Farther on these saints are described as, "*They that keep the commandments of God."* This expression is not intended, for a moment, to teach us that these people are saved by their own merits. They are saints to begin with and in Christ to begin with, but they *prove* they are in Christ by keeping the commandments of God. Let us search ourselves upon this matter. Brethren, we cannot hope to reach the end if we do not keep the way. No man is so unwise as to think that he would reach Bristol if he were to take the road to York. He knows that to get to a place, he must follow the road which leads there. There is a way of holiness in which the righteous walk, and this way of obedience to the Lord's commands must and will be trodden by all who truly believe in Jesus and are justified by faith—for *faith* works *obedience*! A good tree brings forth good fruit. If there is no fruit of obedience to God's commands in you, or in me, we may rest assured that the root of genuine faith in Jesus Christ is not in us at all. In this age, the keeping of Christ's commandments is thought to be of very little consequence. It is dreadful to think how Christians, in the matter of the law of God's house, do not even *pretend* to fol-

low Christ and His appointments. They join a church and they go by the law of that church, though that church's rule may be clean contrary to the will of Christ! But they answer to everything, "That is our rule, you know." But then, who has a right to make rules for you or for me, but Christ Jesus? He is the only legislator in the kingdom of God and by His commands we ought to be guided. I should not, I could not, feel grieved if brethren arrived at contrary conclusions to *mine*, I being fallible myself. But I do feel grieved when I see brethren arrive at conclusions, not as the result of investigation, but simply by taking things just as they find them. Too many professors have a happy-go-lucky style of Christianity. Whichever happens to come first, they follow. Their fathers and mothers were this or that, or they were brought up in such-and-such a connection, and that decides them. They do not pray, "Lord, show me what You would have me to do." Brethren, these things ought not to be! Has not the Master said, "Whoever shall break one of the least of these, My commandments, and teach men so, the same shall be least in the kingdom of heaven"? I would not stand here to condemn my fellow Christians for a moment. In so doing, I should condemn myself, also, but I plead with you, if you do, indeed, believe in Jesus, be careful to observe all things He has commanded you, for He has said, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." And again, "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

A worldling once said to a Puritan, "When so many great men make rents in their consciences, cannot you make just a *little* nick in yours, for peace sake?" "No," he said, "I must follow Christ fully." "Ah, well," you say, "these things are non-essential." *Nothing* is non-essential to complete obedience! It may be non-essential to *salvation*, but it is selfishness to say, "I will do no more than I know to be absolutely necessary to my salvation." It is essential to a good servant to obey his master in all things—and it is essential for the healthiness of a Christian's soul that he should walk very carefully and prayerfully before the Lord—otherwise he will miss the blessing of them of whom it is said, "These are they which follow the Lamb where ever He goes." To be blessed in death, we must keep the commandments of God.

The next mark of the blessed dead is that they kept *"the faith of Jesus*." This is another point upon which I would speak thunderbolts, if I could, for to keep the faith of Jesus is an undertaking much ridiculed nowadays. "Doctrines," one says, "we are tired of doctrines!"—

"For forms and creeds let graceless bigots fight,
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

The opinion is current that to be fluent and original is the main thing in preaching and provided a man is a clever orator, it is a proper thing to hear him. The Lord will wither with the breath of His nostrils that cleverness in any man which departs from the simplicity of the truth! There is a gospel and, "There is also another gospel which is not another, but there are some that trouble you." There is a yes, yes, and there is a no, no—and woe unto those whose preaching is yes *and* no, for it shall not stand in the great day when the Lord shall try every man's work of what sort it is. Search, my brethren, and know what the gospel is—and when

you know it, hold it—hold it as with a hand of iron and never relax your grasp! Grievous wolves have come in among us, wolves of another sort to what were used to be in the churches, yet verily, after the same fashion, they come disguised in sheep's clothing! They use our very terms and phrases, meaning all the while something else! They take away the essentials and vitalities of the faith and replace them with their own inventions, which they brag of as being more consistent with modern thought and with the culture of this very advanced and enlightened age, which seems by degrees to be advancing, half of it to paganism with the ritualists and the other half of it to atheism with the rationalists. From such advances, may God save us! May we be enabled to keep the faith and uphold the truths which we know, by which, also, we are saved! I, for one, cannot desert the grand doctrines of the atoning blood, the substitutionary work of Christ, and the truths which cluster around them. And why can I not desert these things? Because my life, my peace, my hope hang upon them. I am a lost man if there is no substitutionary sacrifice, and I know it! If the Son of God did not die, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God," I must be damned! And therefore, all the instincts of my nature cling to the faith of Jesus. How can I give up that which has redeemed my soul and given me joy and peace and a hope hereafter? I beseech you, do not waver in your belief, but keep the faith, lest you be like some in old time, who "made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience," and were utterly cast away. Woe unto those who keep not the doctrines of the gospel, for in due time they forget its precepts, also, and become utterly reprobate! In departing from Christ, men forsake their own mercies both for life and death. The blessed who die in the Lord are those who "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

Notice that these people *continue faithful till they die*. For it is said, "Blessed are the dead which *die* in the Lord." Final perseverance is the crown of the Christian life. "You did run well; what did hinder you that you should not obey the truth?" Vain is it to *begin* to build—we must crown the edifice—or all men will deride us. Helmet and plume, armor and sword—are all assumed for nothing unless the warrior fights on till he has secured the victory.

Those, who thus entered into rest, *exercised themselves in labors for Christ*, for it is said, "They rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." The idle Christian can have little hope of a reward. He who serves not his Master can scarcely expect that his Master will, at the last, gird Himself and serve him! If I address any here who are not bringing forth fruit unto God, I can say no less than this, "Every tree that brings not forth fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatever a man sows that shall he also reap." The rule is invariable. It must be so. If there are no works and no labors for Christ, no suffering or patient endurance, we lack the main *evidence* of being the people of God at all!

To close this description of character, these people who die in the Lord *were in the Lord*. That is the great point! They could not have *died* in the Lord if they had not *lived* in the Lord. But are *we* in the Lord? Is the Lord, by faith, in us? Dear hearer, are you resting upon Jesus Christ on-

ly? Is He all your salvation and all your desire? What is your reply to my inquiry? You are not perfect, but Jesus is! Are you hanging upon Him as the vessel hangs upon the nail? You cannot expect to stand before God with acceptance in yourself, but are you "accepted in the Beloved"? That is the question—"accepted in the Beloved." Are you in Christ, and is Christ in you, by real vital *union*—by a faith that is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in your soul? Answer, I charge you, for if you cannot answer these things before one of your own flesh and blood, how will you answer in your soul when the Lord, Himself shall come?

II. So much with regard to the character; and now, a very few words with regard to THE BLESSEDNESS which is ascribed to those who die in the Lord. "They rest from their labors."

By this is meant that the saints in heaven *rest from such labors as they performed here*. No doubt they fulfill service in heaven. It would be an unhappy heaven in which there should be nothing for our activities to spend themselves upon. But such labors as we can do *here* will not fall to our lot *there*. There we shall not teach the ignorant, or rebuke the erring, or comfort the desponding, or help the needy. There we cannot oppose the teacher of error, or do battle against the tempter of youth. There no little children can be gathered at our knee and trained for Jesus. No sick ones can be visited with the Word of comfort, no backsliders led back, no young converts confirmed, no sinners converted. They rest from such labors as these in heaven.

They rest from their labors in the sense that they are no longer subject to the *toil* of labor. Whatever they do in heaven will yield, then, refreshment and never cause them weariness. As some birds are said to rest upon the wing, so do the saints find, in holy activity, their serenest repose. They serve Him day and night in His temple and therein they rest. Even as on earth, by wearing our Lord's yoke, we find rest unto our souls, so in the perfect obedience of heaven, complete repose is found.

They rest, also, from the *woe* of labor, for I find the word has been read by some, "They rest from their wailing." The original is a word which signifies to beat and therefore, as applied to beating on the breast it indicates sorrow. But the beating may signify conflict with the world, or labor in any form. The sorrow of work for Jesus is over with for all the blessed dead. Nothing is allowed to approach to molest their sweet peace. They shall no more say that they are sick, neither shall adversity afflict them.

Their rest is *perfect*. I do not know whether the idea of rest is cheering to all of you, but to some of us, whose work exceeds our strength, it is full of pleasantness. Some have bright thoughts of service hereafter and I hope we all have, but to those who have more to do for Christ than the weary brain can endure—the prospect of a rest has in it the ocean of rest and very pleasant.

They rest from their labors. To the servant of the Lord it is very sweet to think that, when we reach our heavenly home, we shall rest from the *faults* of our labors. We shall make no mistakes there! We shall never use too strong language or mistaken words, nor err in spirit, nor fail through excess or lack of zeal. We shall rest from all that which grieves us in the retrospect of our service. Our holy things up there will not need to be

wept over, though now, they are daily salted with our tears. We shall, there, rest from the *discouragements* of our labor. There, no cold-hearted brethren will damp our ardor, or accuse us of evil motives. No desponding brethren will warn us that we are rash when our faith is strong and obstinate when our confidence is firm. None will pluck us by the sleeve and hold us back when we would run the race with all our might. None will chide us because our way is different from theirs—and none will foretell disaster and defeat when we confidently know that God will give us the victory. We shall also rest from the disappointments of labor. Dear brother ministers, we shall not have to go home and tell our Lord that none have believed our report! We shall not go to our beds sleepless because certain of our members are walking inconsistently and others of them are backsliding, while those that we *thought* were converted have gone back again to the world. Here, we must sow in tears—there, we shall reap in joy! There, we shall wear the crown, or rather cast it at our Master's feet. But here, we must plunge deep into the sea to fetch up the pearls from the depths that they may be set in His diadem. Here, we labor—there, we shall enjoy the fruits of toil where no blight or mildew can endanger the harvest.

It will be a sweet thing to get away to heaven, I am sure, to rest from all *contentions* among our fellow Christians. One of the hardest parts of Christ's service is to follow peace and to maintain His truth at the same time. He is a wise chemist who can, in due proportions, blend the pure and the peaceable. He is no mean philosopher who can duly balance the duties of affection and faithfulness and show us how to smite the sin and love the sinner—to denounce the error and yet to cultivate affection for the brother who has fallen into it. We shall not encounter this difficulty in yon bright world of truth and love, for both we and our brethren shall be fully taught of the Lord in all things! We shall be free from the clouds and mists of doubt, which now cover the earth and clear of the demon spirits which seek to ruin men's souls beneath the shadow of deadly falsehood. Blessed be God for this prospect! It will be joy, indeed, to meet no one but a saint! To speak with none but those who use the language of Canaan! To commune with none but the sanctified! Truly blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, if they reach to such as this—

"To this our laboring souls aspire,
With ardent pangs of strong desire."

"Our feet shall stand within your gates, O Jerusalem."

III. The last matter for our consideration is THE REWARD of the blessed dead—"They rest from their labors and their works do follow them." They do not go *before* them—they have a Forerunner infinitely superior to their works, for Jesus and His finished work have led the way. "I go," He says, "to prepare a place for you." In effect, He says to us, "Not your works, but Mine. Not your tears, but My blood. Not your efforts, but My finished work shall lead the procession." How, then, do our works come? Do they march at our right hand or our left as subjects of cheering contemplation? No, no, we dare not take them as companions to comfort us! They *follow* us at our heels. They keep behind us out of sight and we, ourselves, in our desires after holiness, always outmarch them.

The Christian should always keep his best services behind, always going beyond them, and never setting them before his eyes as objects for congratulation. The preacher should labor to preach the best sermons possible, but he must never have them before him so as to cause him, in self-satisfaction, to say, "I have done well." Nor should he have them by his side, as if he rested in them, or leaned upon them—for this were to make antichrists of them. No, let them come behind! That is their proper place. Believers know where to put good works—they do not despise them, they never say a word to depreciate the law, or undervalue the graces of the Holy Spirit—but still they dare not put their holiest endeavors in the place of Christ. Jesus goes before, works follow after.

Note well, that *the works are in existence and are mentioned*—immortality and honor belong to them. The works of godly men are not insignificant or unimportant, as some seem to think. They are not forgotten. They are not as the dried leaves of last year's summer. They are full of life and bloom profusely. They follow the saints as they ascend to heaven, even as the silver trail follows in the wake of the vessel. I pictured, just now, a man burning at the stake. His enemies thought they had destroyed his work, but they only deepened its hold upon the age in which he suffered—and projected his influence into the effect for ages to come! They made a pile of his books and as they blazed before his eyes, they said, "There is an end of you and your heresies." Ah, what fools men have become! Truth is not vanquished with such weapons, no, nor so much as wounded! Think of the case of Wycliffe, which I need not repeat to you. They threw his ashes into the brook—the brook carried them to the river and the river to the sea—till every wave bore its portion of the precious relics, just as the influence of his preaching has been felt on every shore! Persecutors concluded beyond all question that they had made an end of a good man's teaching when they had burned him and thrown away his ashes—but they forgot that the truth often gathers a more vigorous life from the death of the man who speaks it—and books once written have an immortality which laughs at fire! Thousands of infidel and heathen works have gone, so that not a copy is to be found—I hope they never may be unearthed from the salutary oblivion which entombs them—but books written for the Master and His truth, though buried in obscurity, are sure of a resurrection! Fifty years ago, our old Puritan authors' writings, yellow with age and arrayed in dingy bindings, wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented—but they have been brought forth in new editions! Every library is enriched with them! The most powerful religious thought is affected by their utterances and will be till the end of time! You cannot kill a good man's work, nor a good woman's work either, though it is only the teaching of a few children in Sunday school. You do not know to whom you may be teaching Christ, but assuredly you are sowing seed which will blossom and flower in the far off ages. When Mrs. Wesley taught her sons, little did she think what they would become. You do not know who may be in your class, my young friend. You may have there a young Whitefield and if the Lord enables you to lead him to Jesus, he will bring thousands to decision. Yes, at your breast, good woman, there may be

hanging one whom God will make a burning and a shining light! And if you train that little one for Jesus, your work will never be lost. No holy tear is forgotten, it is in God's bottle. No desire for another's good is wasted, God has heard it. A word spoken for Jesus, a mite cast into Christ's treasury, a gracious line written to a friend—all these are things which shall last when yonder sun has blackened into a coal and the moon has curdled into a clot of blood. Deeds done in the power of the Spirit are eternal! Therefore, "Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Good works *follow* Christians and they will be rewarded. The rewards of heaven will be all of grace, but there will be rewards. You cannot read the Scripture without perceiving that the Lord, first, *gives* us good works, and then, in His grace, rewards us for them! There is a, "Well done, good and faithful servant," and there is a proportionate allotment of reward to the man who was faithful with five talents and the man who was faithful with two. You, who live for Jesus, may be quite certain that your life will be recompensed in the world to come. I repeat it, the reward will not be of debt, but of grace—but a reward there will be. Oh, the joy of knowing, when you are gone, that the truth you preached is still living! I think the apostles, since they have been in heaven, must often have looked down on the world and marveled at the work which God helped 12 poor fishermen to do! And they must have felt a growing blessedness as they have seen nations converted by the truth which they preached in feebleness. What must be the joy of a pastor in glory to find his spiritual children coming in, one by one! I think, if I may, I shall go down to the gate and linger there to look for some of you. Yes, not a few shall I welcome as my children there, blessed be the name of the Lord, and what a joy it will be! You teachers—you, my good sister, who has brought so many to Christ—I cannot but believe that it shall multiply your heaven to see your dear ones entering it! You will have a heaven in every one of those whose feet you guided there! You will joy in their joy and praise the Lord in their praise. No, no, the good old cause shall never die and the truth shall never perish! As I have lately read many hard things that have been spoken against the gospel, and as in going up and down throughout this land, I have seen the nation wholly given to idolatry, I have felt something of the spirit of the Pole who, wherever he wanders, says to himself, "No, Poland, you shall never perish!" Despite the darkness and ill-savor of the times, the gospel nears its triumph. It can never perish! Great men may fall, great reputations may grow obscure, grand philosophies may be cast into the shade, monstrous infidelities may win popularity and old superstitions may come back, again, to darken us, but Your cross, Emmanuel, Your pure and simple gospel, the faith our fathers loved and died for, must continue to be earth's brightest light—her daystar—till the day dawns and the shadows flee away! The vessel of the church can never be wrecked! She rocks and reels in the mad tempest, but she is sound from stem to stern, and her pilot steers her with a hand omnipotently wise! Her bow is in the wave, but look, she divides the sea and shakes off the mountainous billows as a lion shakes the dew from his mane! Fiercer

storms than those of the present have beat upon her and yet she has kept her eye to the wind—and in the very teeth of hell's tremendous tempests, she has plowed her glorious way, and so she will till she reaches her appointed haven. The Lord lives and the Lord reigns, and Christ from the cross has gone to the throne—from Gethsemane and Golgotha up to glory—and all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth. We have nothing to do but to go on preaching the gospel and baptizing in His name, according to His bidding. And the day shall come when the might shall be with the right and the truth—and the right hand of Jesus, with the iron rod, shall break His adversaries and reward His friends. The Lord acknowledges every one of us who are on His side, but if we are not on His side, oh, that we may speedily become so by repentance and faith! May the Lord turn us and we shall be turned, for if, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," depend upon it, *cursed* are they that die *out* of Christ—yes, cursed with a curse—and their works shall follow them or go before them, unto judgement, to their condemnation! May infinite mercy save us from being howled at by our works in the next world, save us from being hunted down by the wolves of our past sins risen from the dead! Remember, unless we are forgiven, our transgressions will rise from the grave of forgetfulness and gather around us, and tear us in pieces—and there shall be none to deliver.

May we fly, even now, to Jesus, and through faith in His blood be delivered from all evil that we also may have it said of us, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

The Lord bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Revelation 16.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—878, 853, 852.

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A VOICE FROM HEAVEN
NO. 1219

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

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from now on: Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."
Revelation 14:12, 13.

THE text speaks of a voice from heaven which said, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." The witness of that voice is not needed upon every occasion, for even the most common observer is compelled to feel, concerning many of the righteous, that their deaths are blessed. Balaam, with all his moral shortsightedness, could say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." That is the case when death comes in peaceful fashion. The man has lived a calm, godly, consistent life. He has lived as long as he could well have wished to live and, in dying, he sees his children and his children's children gathered around his bed. What a fine picture the old man makes, as he sits up with that snowy head supported by snowy pillows. Hear him as he tells his children that goodness and mercy have followed him all the days of his life and now he is going to dwell in the house of the Lord forever! See the seraphic smile which lights up his face as he bids them farewell and assures them that he already hears the harpers harping with their harps—bids them stop those tears and weep not for him, but for themselves—charges them to follow him so far as he has followed Christ and to meet him at the right hand of the Judge in the day of His appearing. Then the old man, almost without a sigh, leans back and is present with the Lord!—

"Heaven waits not the last moment;
Owns her friends on this side death,
And points them out to men;
A lecture silent but of sovereign power!
To vice, confusion—and to virtue peace."

Even the blind bat's-eyed worldling can see that, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord" in such a fashion as that! Nor is it difficult to perceive that this is the case in many other instances. We have, ourselves, known several good men and women who were afraid of death and were, much of their lifetime, subject to bondage. But they went to bed and fell asleep and never woke again in this world. And as far as appearances go, they could never have known so much as one single pang in departure, but fell asleep among mortals to awake amid the angels! Truly, such gentle loosing of the cable, such fording of Jordan dry shod, such ascents of the celestial hills with music at every step are desirable beyond measure!

And we need no voice out of the excellent glory to proclaim that blessed are the dead, who in such a case, die in the Lord.

But that was not the picture which John had before his mind. It was quite another—a picture grim and black to mortal eyes. The sounds which meet the ear are not those of music, nor the whispered consolations of friends, but quite the reverse. All is painful, terrible, and the very opposite of blessed, so far as strikes the eyes and ears. Therefore, it became necessary that there should be a voice from heaven to say, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." I will give you the picture. The man of God is on the rack. They are turning that infernal machine with all their might. They have dragged every bone from its place. They have exercised their tortures till every nerve of his body cries with agony! He is flung into a dark and loathsome dungeon and left there to recover strength enough to be led in derision through the streets. Upon his head, they have placed a cap painted with devils and all his garments they have bedizened with the resemblance of fiends and flames of hell. And now, with a shaveling priest on each side, holding up before him a superstitious emblem, and bidding him adore the Virgin or worship the cross, the good man, loaded with chains, goes through the streets, say of Madrid or Antwerp, to the place prepared for his execution. "An act of faith," they call it—an *auto da fe*—and an act of heroic faith it is, indeed, when the man of God takes his place at the stake, in his shirt, with an iron chain about his loins, and is fastened to the stake where he must stand and burn "quick to the death." Can you see him as they kindle the wood beneath him and the flames begin to consume his quivering flesh till he is all ablaze and burning—burning without a cry—though fiercely tormented by the fire? Now assuredly is that voice from heaven needed, and you can hear it, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord"—blessed even when they die like this! "Here is the patience of the saints" and in the esteem of angels and of glorified spirits, such a death may, under many aspects, be adjudged to be more blessed than the peaceful deathbed of the saint who had some fellowship with Jesus, but was not made to drink of His cup and to be baptized with His baptism, as to die a painful and shameful death as a witness for the truth. It must have been a dreadful thing to watch the rabble rousers hurrying to Smithfield, to stand there and see the burning of the saints. It would have been a more fearful thing, still, if possible, to have been in the dungeons of the low countries and seen the Anabaptists put to death in secret. In a dungeon dark and pestilential, there is placed a huge vat of water—and the faithful witness to Scriptural baptism is drowned—drowned for following the Lamb where ever He goes! Drowned alone—where no eyes could pity and no voice from out of the crowd could shout a word of help and comfort. Men hear only the coarse jests of the murderers who have given the dipper his last dip—but the ear of faith hears ringing through the dungeon, the voice, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." True, through the connection of their names with a fanatic band, these holy ancestors of ours have gained scant honor *here*, yet their record is on high! Blessed they are and blessed they shall be! Where ever on this earth, whether among the snows of Piedmont's valleys or in the fair fields of France, saints have

died by sword or famine, or fire or massacre, for the testimony of Jesus, because they would not bear the mark of the beast either in their forehead or in their hand, this voice is heard sounding out of the third heavens, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

It matters not, my brethren, *where* they die, who die in the Lord! It may be that they have not the honor of martyrdom in man's esteem, but yet are witnesses for the Lord in poverty and pain. Here is the patience and here, also, is the blessedness of the saints. Yonder poor girl lies in an attic, where the stars look between the tiles, and the moon gleams on the ragged hangings of the pallet where she largely suffers and without a murmur, gradually dissolves into death. However obscure and unknown she may be, she has been kept from the great transgression. Tempted sorely, she has yet held fast her purity and her integrity. Her prayers, unheard by others, have gone up before the Lord and she dies in the Lord, saved through Jesus Christ. None will preach her funeral sermon, but she shall not miss that voice from heaven, saying, "Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

We repeat it, it matters not where you die nor in what condition—if you are in the Lord, and die in the Lord—right blessed are you!

Now, it is quite certain that very soon every one of us must leave this world. We know that we are no more immortal than our fellow men. Though by a sad piece of imposition upon ourselves, we count all men mortal but ourselves, right surely mortal we are! And each one of us shall, in due time, pass away out of this world. The saints, themselves, must die, though to them death is far different than to sinners. It is greatly wise to be ready for our undressing, prepared for the sweet sleep in Jesus. And if we are not in Christ, it is all the more imperative upon us to consider our latter end that we rush not forward in the dark. I therefore want, for a few minutes only, to disengage your mind from the too abundant snares of this world and the slavery of human cares, that you may look across the border into the great future so surely yours, perhaps so *nearly* yours. Oh, that you might be helped to prepare for that future, that by such preparation, through divine grace, you may be numbered among the blessed who die in the Lord!

First, we shall briefly *describe their character*, then mention *the rest* which constitutes their blessedness, and conclude by meditating upon *the reward*, which is a further part of that blessedness.

I. First, then, let us describe THE CHARACTER. "Here is the patience of *the saint*s." To be blessed when we die, we *must* be saints. By nature, we are *sinners* and by divine grace, we must become saints if we would enter heaven, for it is the land of saints and none but saints can ever pass its frontiers. Since *death* does not change character, we must be made saints here below if we are to be saints above. We have come to misuse the term, "saint," and apply it only to some few of God's people. What does it mean but this—holy? Holy men and holy women—these are saints! It is not *Saint* Peter and *Saint* John merely—YOU are a saint, dear brother, if you live unto the Lord. You are a saint, my sister, however obscure your name, if you keep the Lord's way and walk before Him in sincere obedience. We must be saints—and in order to be this, we must be

renewed in spirit, for we are sinners by nature—we must, in fact, be born again. All unholy and unclean, we are by nature nothing else but sin—and we must be created anew by the power of the Holy Spirit, or else holiness will never dwell in us. Our loves must be changed so that we no longer love evil things, but delight only in that which is true, generous, kind, upright, pure, and godlike. We must be changed in every faculty and power of our nature by that same hand which first made us. And across our brows must be written these words, "Holiness unto the Lord."

The word, *saint*, denotes not merely the pure in *character*, but those who are set apart unto God—dedicated ones, sanctified by being devoted to holy uses—by being, in fact, consecrated to God alone. My dear hearer, do you belong to God? Do you live to glorify Jesus? Can you honestly put your hand on your heart and say, "Yes, I belong to Him who bought me with His blood and I endeavor, by His grace, to live as He would have me live. I am devoted to His honor, loving my fellow men and loving my Lord, endeavoring to be like He is in all things"? You must be such, for, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

"But how am I to attain to holiness?" You cannot rise to it except by divine strength. The Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier. Jesus, who is our Justifier, is also made unto us sanctification and if we, by faith, lay hold on Him, we shall find in Him all that we need. Let this be a searching matter with everyone here present, as I desire to make it with myself—and may God grant we may be numbered with the saints!

But the glorified are also described in our text as *patient* ones—"Here is the *patience* of the saints," or, if you choose to render it differently, you may lawfully do so—"Here is the *endurance* of the saints." Those who are to be crowned in heaven must bear the cross on earth. "No cross, no crown," is still most true. Many would be saints if everybody would encourage them. But as soon as a hard word is spoken, they are offended. They would go to heaven, if they could travel there amidst the hosannas of the multitude, but when they hear the cry of, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," straightway they desert the Man of Nazareth, for they have no intention to share His cross, or to be despised and rejected of men. The true saints of God are prepared to endure scoffing, jeering, and scorning—they accept this cross of Christ without murmuring, remembering Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself. They know that their brethren who went before, "Resisted unto blood, striving against sin," and as they have not yet come to that point, they count it foul scorn that they should be ashamed or confounded in minor trials, let their adversaries do what they may. Those who are to sing Christ's praise in heaven must, first, have been willing to bear Christ's shame below! They must be numbered with Him in humiliation, or they cannot expect to be partakers with Him in glory. And now, dear brethren, how is it with us? Are we willing to be reproached for Christ's glory? Can we bear the sarcasm of the wise? Can we bear the jest of the witty? Are we willing to be pointed at as Puritanical, conscientious, and precise? Do we dare to be singular when to be singular is to be right? If we can do this, by God's grace, let us further question ourselves. Could we endure this ordeal if its intensity were increased? Suppose it came to something

worse—to the thumbscrew or the rack—could we bear it, then? I sometimes fear that many professors would cut a sorry figure if persecuting times should come, for I observe that to be excluded from what is called, "society," is a great grievance to many modern Christians! When they settle in any place, their inquiry is not, "Where can I hear the gospel?" but, "Which is the most fashionable place of worship?" And the question with regard to their children is not, "Where will they have Christian associations?" but, "How can I introduce them to society?" Introduction to society frequently being an introduction to temptation. and the commencement of a life of levity! Oh, that all Christians could scorn the soft witcheries of the world, for, if they cannot, they may be sure that they will not bear its fiery breath when, like an oven, persecution comes forth to try the saints! God grant us grace to have the patience of the saints—that patience of the saints which will cheerfully suffer loss rather than do a wrong thing in business! God grant us that patience of the saints which will pine in poverty sooner than yield a principle though a kingdom were at stake! That patience of the saints which dreads not being unfashionable, if the right is reckoned so! That patience of the saints which courts no man's smile and fears no man's frown—but can endure all things for Jesus' sake and is resolved to do so! Can you cleave to your Lord when the many turn aside? Can you witness that He has the living Word and none upon earth beside? Can you watch with Him when all forsake Him and stand by Him when He is the butt of ribald jest and scorn? Can you bear the sneer of science, falsely so called, and the politer sarcasm of those who say they "doubt," but mean that they utterly disbelieve? Blessed is that *preacher* who shall be true to Christ in these evil days! Blessed is that church member who shall follow Christ's Word through the mire and through the slough, over the hill and down the dale, caring for nothing but to be true to His Master! This must be our resolve! If we are to win the glory, we must be faithful unto death. God make us so! "Here is the patience of the saints"—it comes not by nature—it is the gift of the grace of God.

Farther on these saints are described as, "*They that keep the commandments of God."* This expression is not intended, for a moment, to teach us that these people are saved by their own merits. They are saints to begin with and in Christ to begin with, but they *prove* they are in Christ by keeping the commandments of God. Let us search ourselves upon this matter. Brethren, we cannot hope to reach the end if we do not keep the way. No man is so unwise as to think that he would reach Bristol if he were to take the road to York. He knows that to get to a place, he must follow the road which leads there. There is a way of holiness in which the righteous walk, and this way of obedience to the Lord's commands must and will be trodden by all who truly believe in Jesus and are justified by faith—for *faith* works *obedience*! A good tree brings forth good fruit. If there is no fruit of obedience to God's commands in you, or in me, we may rest assured that the root of genuine faith in Jesus Christ is not in us at all. In this age, the keeping of Christ's commandments is thought to be of very little consequence. It is dreadful to think how Christians, in the matter of the law of God's house, do not even *pretend* to fol-

low Christ and His appointments. They join a church and they go by the law of that church, though that church's rule may be clean contrary to the will of Christ! But they answer to everything, "That is our rule, you know." But then, who has a right to make rules for you or for me, but Christ Jesus? He is the only legislator in the kingdom of God and by His commands we ought to be guided. I should not, I could not, feel grieved if brethren arrived at contrary conclusions to *mine*, I being fallible myself. But I do feel grieved when I see brethren arrive at conclusions, not as the result of investigation, but simply by taking things just as they find them. Too many professors have a happy-go-lucky style of Christianity. Whichever happens to come first, they follow. Their fathers and mothers were this or that, or they were brought up in such-and-such a connection, and that decides them. They do not pray, "Lord, show me what You would have me to do." Brethren, these things ought not to be! Has not the Master said, "Whoever shall break one of the least of these, My commandments, and teach men so, the same shall be least in the kingdom of heaven"? I would not stand here to condemn my fellow Christians for a moment. In so doing, I should condemn myself, also, but I plead with you, if you do, indeed, believe in Jesus, be careful to observe all things He has commanded you, for He has said, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." And again, "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

A worldling once said to a Puritan, "When so many great men make rents in their consciences, cannot you make just a *little* nick in yours, for peace sake?" "No," he said, "I must follow Christ fully." "Ah, well," you say, "these things are non-essential." *Nothing* is non-essential to complete obedience! It may be non-essential to *salvation*, but it is selfishness to say, "I will do no more than I know to be absolutely necessary to my salvation." It is essential to a good servant to obey his master in all things—and it is essential for the healthiness of a Christian's soul that he should walk very carefully and prayerfully before the Lord—otherwise he will miss the blessing of them of whom it is said, "These are they which follow the Lamb where ever He goes." To be blessed in death, we must keep the commandments of God.

The next mark of the blessed dead is that they kept *"the faith of Jesus*." This is another point upon which I would speak thunderbolts, if I could, for to keep the faith of Jesus is an undertaking much ridiculed nowadays. "Doctrines," one says, "we are tired of doctrines!"—

"For forms and creeds let graceless bigots fight,
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

The opinion is current that to be fluent and original is the main thing in preaching and provided a man is a clever orator, it is a proper thing to hear him. The Lord will wither with the breath of His nostrils that cleverness in any man which departs from the simplicity of the truth! There is a gospel and, "There is also another gospel which is not another, but there are some that trouble you." There is a yes, yes, and there is a no, no—and woe unto those whose preaching is yes *and* no, for it shall not stand in the great day when the Lord shall try every man's work of what sort it is. Search, my brethren, and know what the gospel is—and when

you know it, hold it—hold it as with a hand of iron and never relax your grasp! Grievous wolves have come in among us, wolves of another sort to what were used to be in the churches, yet verily, after the same fashion, they come disguised in sheep's clothing! They use our very terms and phrases, meaning all the while something else! They take away the essentials and vitalities of the faith and replace them with their own inventions, which they brag of as being more consistent with modern thought and with the culture of this very advanced and enlightened age, which seems by degrees to be advancing, half of it to paganism with the ritualists and the other half of it to atheism with the rationalists. From such advances, may God save us! May we be enabled to keep the faith and uphold the truths which we know, by which, also, we are saved! I, for one, cannot desert the grand doctrines of the atoning blood, the substitutionary work of Christ, and the truths which cluster around them. And why can I not desert these things? Because my life, my peace, my hope hang upon them. I am a lost man if there is no substitutionary sacrifice, and I know it! If the Son of God did not die, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God," I must be damned! And therefore, all the instincts of my nature cling to the faith of Jesus. How can I give up that which has redeemed my soul and given me joy and peace and a hope hereafter? I beseech you, do not waver in your belief, but keep the faith, lest you be like some in old time, who "made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience," and were utterly cast away. Woe unto those who keep not the doctrines of the gospel, for in due time they forget its precepts, also, and become utterly reprobate! In departing from Christ, men forsake their own mercies both for life and death. The blessed who die in the Lord are those who "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

Notice that these people *continue faithful till they die*. For it is said, "Blessed are the dead which *die* in the Lord." Final perseverance is the crown of the Christian life. "You did run well; what did hinder you that you should not obey the truth?" Vain is it to *begin* to build—we must crown the edifice—or all men will deride us. Helmet and plume, armor and sword—are all assumed for nothing unless the warrior fights on till he has secured the victory.

Those, who thus entered into rest, *exercised themselves in labors for Christ*, for it is said, "They rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." The idle Christian can have little hope of a reward. He who serves not his Master can scarcely expect that his Master will, at the last, gird Himself and serve him! If I address any here who are not bringing forth fruit unto God, I can say no less than this, "Every tree that brings not forth fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatever a man sows that shall he also reap." The rule is invariable. It must be so. If there are no works and no labors for Christ, no suffering or patient endurance, we lack the main *evidence* of being the people of God at all!

To close this description of character, these people who die in the Lord *were in the Lord*. That is the great point! They could not have *died* in the Lord if they had not *lived* in the Lord. But are *we* in the Lord? Is the Lord, by faith, in us? Dear hearer, are you resting upon Jesus Christ on-

ly? Is He all your salvation and all your desire? What is your reply to my inquiry? You are not perfect, but Jesus is! Are you hanging upon Him as the vessel hangs upon the nail? You cannot expect to stand before God with acceptance in yourself, but are you "accepted in the Beloved"? That is the question—"accepted in the Beloved." Are you in Christ, and is Christ in you, by real vital *union*—by a faith that is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in your soul? Answer, I charge you, for if you cannot answer these things before one of your own flesh and blood, how will you answer in your soul when the Lord, Himself shall come?

II. So much with regard to the character; and now, a very few words with regard to THE BLESSEDNESS which is ascribed to those who die in the Lord. "They rest from their labors."

By this is meant that the saints in heaven *rest from such labors as they performed here*. No doubt they fulfill service in heaven. It would be an unhappy heaven in which there should be nothing for our activities to spend themselves upon. But such labors as we can do *here* will not fall to our lot *there*. There we shall not teach the ignorant, or rebuke the erring, or comfort the desponding, or help the needy. There we cannot oppose the teacher of error, or do battle against the tempter of youth. There no little children can be gathered at our knee and trained for Jesus. No sick ones can be visited with the Word of comfort, no backsliders led back, no young converts confirmed, no sinners converted. They rest from such labors as these in heaven.

They rest from their labors in the sense that they are no longer subject to the *toil* of labor. Whatever they do in heaven will yield, then, refreshment and never cause them weariness. As some birds are said to rest upon the wing, so do the saints find, in holy activity, their serenest repose. They serve Him day and night in His temple and therein they rest. Even as on earth, by wearing our Lord's yoke, we find rest unto our souls, so in the perfect obedience of heaven, complete repose is found.

They rest, also, from the *woe* of labor, for I find the word has been read by some, "They rest from their wailing." The original is a word which signifies to beat and therefore, as applied to beating on the breast it indicates sorrow. But the beating may signify conflict with the world, or labor in any form. The sorrow of work for Jesus is over with for all the blessed dead. Nothing is allowed to approach to molest their sweet peace. They shall no more say that they are sick, neither shall adversity afflict them.

Their rest is *perfect*. I do not know whether the idea of rest is cheering to all of you, but to some of us, whose work exceeds our strength, it is full of pleasantness. Some have bright thoughts of service hereafter and I hope we all have, but to those who have more to do for Christ than the weary brain can endure—the prospect of a rest has in it the ocean of rest and very pleasant.

They rest from their labors. To the servant of the Lord it is very sweet to think that, when we reach our heavenly home, we shall rest from the *faults* of our labors. We shall make no mistakes there! We shall never use too strong language or mistaken words, nor err in spirit, nor fail through excess or lack of zeal. We shall rest from all that which grieves us in the retrospect of our service. Our holy things up there will not need to be

wept over, though now, they are daily salted with our tears. We shall, there, rest from the *discouragements* of our labor. There, no cold-hearted brethren will damp our ardor, or accuse us of evil motives. No desponding brethren will warn us that we are rash when our faith is strong and obstinate when our confidence is firm. None will pluck us by the sleeve and hold us back when we would run the race with all our might. None will chide us because our way is different from theirs—and none will foretell disaster and defeat when we confidently know that God will give us the victory. We shall also rest from the disappointments of labor. Dear brother ministers, we shall not have to go home and tell our Lord that none have believed our report! We shall not go to our beds sleepless because certain of our members are walking inconsistently and others of them are backsliding, while those that we *thought* were converted have gone back again to the world. Here, we must sow in tears—there, we shall reap in joy! There, we shall wear the crown, or rather cast it at our Master's feet. But here, we must plunge deep into the sea to fetch up the pearls from the depths that they may be set in His diadem. Here, we labor—there, we shall enjoy the fruits of toil where no blight or mildew can endanger the harvest.

It will be a sweet thing to get away to heaven, I am sure, to rest from all *contentions* among our fellow Christians. One of the hardest parts of Christ's service is to follow peace and to maintain His truth at the same time. He is a wise chemist who can, in due proportions, blend the pure and the peaceable. He is no mean philosopher who can duly balance the duties of affection and faithfulness and show us how to smite the sin and love the sinner—to denounce the error and yet to cultivate affection for the brother who has fallen into it. We shall not encounter this difficulty in yon bright world of truth and love, for both we and our brethren shall be fully taught of the Lord in all things! We shall be free from the clouds and mists of doubt, which now cover the earth and clear of the demon spirits which seek to ruin men's souls beneath the shadow of deadly falsehood. Blessed be God for this prospect! It will be joy, indeed, to meet no one but a saint! To speak with none but those who use the language of Canaan! To commune with none but the sanctified! Truly blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, if they reach to such as this—

"To this our laboring souls aspire,
With ardent pangs of strong desire."

"Our feet shall stand within your gates, O Jerusalem."

III. The last matter for our consideration is THE REWARD of the blessed dead—"They rest from their labors and their works do follow them." They do not go *before* them—they have a Forerunner infinitely superior to their works, for Jesus and His finished work have led the way. "I go," He says, "to prepare a place for you." In effect, He says to us, "Not your works, but Mine. Not your tears, but My blood. Not your efforts, but My finished work shall lead the procession." How, then, do our works come? Do they march at our right hand or our left as subjects of cheering contemplation? No, no, we dare not take them as companions to comfort us! They *follow* us at our heels. They keep behind us out of sight and we, ourselves, in our desires after holiness, always outmarch them.

The Christian should always keep his best services behind, always going beyond them, and never setting them before his eyes as objects for congratulation. The preacher should labor to preach the best sermons possible, but he must never have them before him so as to cause him, in self-satisfaction, to say, "I have done well." Nor should he have them by his side, as if he rested in them, or leaned upon them—for this were to make antichrists of them. No, let them come behind! That is their proper place. Believers know where to put good works—they do not despise them, they never say a word to depreciate the law, or undervalue the graces of the Holy Spirit—but still they dare not put their holiest endeavors in the place of Christ. Jesus goes before, works follow after.

Note well, that *the works are in existence and are mentioned*—immortality and honor belong to them. The works of godly men are not insignificant or unimportant, as some seem to think. They are not forgotten. They are not as the dried leaves of last year's summer. They are full of life and bloom profusely. They follow the saints as they ascend to heaven, even as the silver trail follows in the wake of the vessel. I pictured, just now, a man burning at the stake. His enemies thought they had destroyed his work, but they only deepened its hold upon the age in which he suffered—and projected his influence into the effect for ages to come! They made a pile of his books and as they blazed before his eyes, they said, "There is an end of you and your heresies." Ah, what fools men have become! Truth is not vanquished with such weapons, no, nor so much as wounded! Think of the case of Wycliffe, which I need not repeat to you. They threw his ashes into the brook—the brook carried them to the river and the river to the sea—till every wave bore its portion of the precious relics, just as the influence of his preaching has been felt on every shore! Persecutors concluded beyond all question that they had made an end of a good man's teaching when they had burned him and thrown away his ashes—but they forgot that the truth often gathers a more vigorous life from the death of the man who speaks it—and books once written have an immortality which laughs at fire! Thousands of infidel and heathen works have gone, so that not a copy is to be found—I hope they never may be unearthed from the salutary oblivion which entombs them—but books written for the Master and His truth, though buried in obscurity, are sure of a resurrection! Fifty years ago, our old Puritan authors' writings, yellow with age and arrayed in dingy bindings, wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented—but they have been brought forth in new editions! Every library is enriched with them! The most powerful religious thought is affected by their utterances and will be till the end of time! You cannot kill a good man's work, nor a good woman's work either, though it is only the teaching of a few children in Sunday school. You do not know to whom you may be teaching Christ, but assuredly you are sowing seed which will blossom and flower in the far off ages. When Mrs. Wesley taught her sons, little did she think what they would become. You do not know who may be in your class, my young friend. You may have there a young Whitefield and if the Lord enables you to lead him to Jesus, he will bring thousands to decision. Yes, at your breast, good woman, there may be

hanging one whom God will make a burning and a shining light! And if you train that little one for Jesus, your work will never be lost. No holy tear is forgotten, it is in God's bottle. No desire for another's good is wasted, God has heard it. A word spoken for Jesus, a mite cast into Christ's treasury, a gracious line written to a friend—all these are things which shall last when yonder sun has blackened into a coal and the moon has curdled into a clot of blood. Deeds done in the power of the Spirit are eternal! Therefore, "Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Good works *follow* Christians and they will be rewarded. The rewards of heaven will be all of grace, but there will be rewards. You cannot read the Scripture without perceiving that the Lord, first, *gives* us good works, and then, in His grace, rewards us for them! There is a, "Well done, good and faithful servant," and there is a proportionate allotment of reward to the man who was faithful with five talents and the man who was faithful with two. You, who live for Jesus, may be quite certain that your life will be recompensed in the world to come. I repeat it, the reward will not be of debt, but of grace—but a reward there will be. Oh, the joy of knowing, when you are gone, that the truth you preached is still living! I think the apostles, since they have been in heaven, must often have looked down on the world and marveled at the work which God helped 12 poor fishermen to do! And they must have felt a growing blessedness as they have seen nations converted by the truth which they preached in feebleness. What must be the joy of a pastor in glory to find his spiritual children coming in, one by one! I think, if I may, I shall go down to the gate and linger there to look for some of you. Yes, not a few shall I welcome as my children there, blessed be the name of the Lord, and what a joy it will be! You teachers—you, my good sister, who has brought so many to Christ—I cannot but believe that it shall multiply your heaven to see your dear ones entering it! You will have a heaven in every one of those whose feet you guided there! You will joy in their joy and praise the Lord in their praise. No, no, the good old cause shall never die and the truth shall never perish! As I have lately read many hard things that have been spoken against the gospel, and as in going up and down throughout this land, I have seen the nation wholly given to idolatry, I have felt something of the spirit of the Pole who, wherever he wanders, says to himself, "No, Poland, you shall never perish!" Despite the darkness and ill-savor of the times, the gospel nears its triumph. It can never perish! Great men may fall, great reputations may grow obscure, grand philosophies may be cast into the shade, monstrous infidelities may win popularity and old superstitions may come back, again, to darken us, but Your cross, Emmanuel, Your pure and simple gospel, the faith our fathers loved and died for, must continue to be earth's brightest light—her daystar—till the day dawns and the shadows flee away! The vessel of the church can never be wrecked! She rocks and reels in the mad tempest, but she is sound from stem to stern, and her pilot steers her with a hand omnipotently wise! Her bow is in the wave, but look, she divides the sea and shakes off the mountainous billows as a lion shakes the dew from his mane! Fiercer

storms than those of the present have beat upon her and yet she has kept her eye to the wind—and in the very teeth of hell's tremendous tempests, she has plowed her glorious way, and so she will till she reaches her appointed haven. The Lord lives and the Lord reigns, and Christ from the cross has gone to the throne—from Gethsemane and Golgotha up to glory—and all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth. We have nothing to do but to go on preaching the gospel and baptizing in His name, according to His bidding. And the day shall come when the might shall be with the right and the truth—and the right hand of Jesus, with the iron rod, shall break His adversaries and reward His friends. The Lord acknowledges every one of us who are on His side, but if we are not on His side, oh, that we may speedily become so by repentance and faith! May the Lord turn us and we shall be turned, for if, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," depend upon it, *cursed* are they that die *out* of Christ—yes, cursed with a curse—and their works shall follow them or go before them, unto judgement, to their condemnation! May infinite mercy save us from being howled at by our works in the next world, save us from being hunted down by the wolves of our past sins risen from the dead! Remember, unless we are forgiven, our transgressions will rise from the grave of forgetfulness and gather around us, and tear us in pieces—and there shall be none to deliver.

May we fly, even now, to Jesus, and through faith in His blood be delivered from all evil that we also may have it said of us, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

The Lord bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Revelation 16.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—878, 853, 852.

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THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT, THE SECRET TOKEN OF THE SONS OF GOD
NO. 1220

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

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Romans 8:14.

CHILDREN are expected to bear some likeness to their parents. Children of God, born of the grandest of all parents, regenerated by the almighty energy of the divine Spirit, are sure to bear a high degree of likeness to their heavenly Father. We cannot be like God in many of His divine attributes, for they are unique and incommunicable—it is not possible for us to wield His power, or to possess His infinite knowledge—neither can we be independent and self-existent, or possessors of sovereignty or worshipfulness. Man can never be so expressly the image of the Father as Jesus is, for He is, in a mysterious sense, the only-begotten Son of God. We can imitate God, however, in many of His attributes, mainly those of a moral and spiritual kind. We must, in these qualities, be "imitators of God as dear children" or our heavenly pedigree cannot be made out. The point mentioned in the text must never be a matter of question, for if that is doubtful, our filial relationship to God is unproved. We must be, "led by the Spirit of God." That divine Spirit, who is ever with the Father and the Son, must be always with us so that we are guided, instructed, impelled, quickened, actuated, and influenced by Him, or else we must not dare to think ourselves the sons of God.

The idea of a divine fatherhood extending over all mankind does not appear to have been recognized by the apostle Paul, in this text, at any rate. Here the fatherhood is for *some*, not for *all*, and the text discriminates between the, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God," and the rest of mankind who are under no such influence. In men who are devoid of the Holy Spirit, there is another spirit—and that other spirit marks them out as sons of another father—"They are of their father the devil, for his works they do." There have been two seeds from the beginning—the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent—and it is both untrue and immoral to believe God stands in the same relation to the two opposing families. No, my brethren, *our* Father who is in heaven is not to be claimed as father by the unbeliever, for to them Jesus expressly says, "If God were your Father, you would love Me."

The text furnishes us with a very simple, but sharp and decisive test which we shall do well to use upon ourselves. It should be employed to try every one of us. If it had said, "As many as have been baptized are the

sons of God," we might have been content to sit very easily in our places. If it had said, "As many as eat and drink at the holy feast of Christian fellowship are the children of God," we might have remembered how short a time ago we were sitting with the saints around the communion table. If the doing of certain external acts, or the utterance of certain prayers, or the avowal of orthodox principles, or abstinence from the grosser vices had been made the royal mark and heavenly seal of the children of God we might have taken our ease after ascertaining that we are correct as to these things. If being united with an earnest church and being members of a faithful community had been divinely ordained to be an unquestionable certificate of sonship with the Lord Most High, we might have rested perfectly satisfied without putting ourselves into the crucible. But, since these things are not so arranged, I trust that none of us will be so unwise as to neglect the examination which the text suggests to every prudent mind. Come, my brethren, take nothing for granted on so weighty a business as your soul's eternal interests, but search for evidence and see to the matter as wise householders would do if their whole substance were at stake. Those who are "led by the Spirit of God" are the sons of God. Those who are *not* led by the Spirit of God are not His sons. Therefore, search and see what spirit is in you, that you may know whose children you are.

To help you in this matter, I purpose that we should consider, first, where it is that the Spirit of God leads men, that we may see whether He has ever led us there.

I. WHERE DOES THE SPIRIT OF GOD LEAD THE SONS OF GOD? First of all, He leads them to *repentance*. One of the first acts of the Holy Spirit is to guide the sons of God to the Mercy Seat with tears in their eyes. He leads us into the abominable chambers of imagery concealed within our fallen nature, unfastens door after door, and sets open before our enlightened eyes the secret places polluted with idols and loathsome images portrayed upon the wall. He points out with His hands of light the idol gods, the images of jealousy, and the unclean and abominable things within our nature and thus, He astonishes us into humility. We could not have believed that such evil things haunted our souls, but His discoveries undeceive us and correct our boastful estimates of ourselves. Then, with that same finger, He points to our past life and shows us the blots, the errors, the willful sins, the sins of ignorance, the aggravated transgressions, the offenses against light and knowledge which have marred our career from our youth up. And whereas, previously, we looked upon the pages of our life and thought them fair, when the Spirit has led us into light, we see how black our history has been and being filled with shame and terror, we cry out to God that we may confess our sin and acknowledge that if He should throw us into hell, it would be no more than we deserve! Dear friend, did the Holy Spirit ever lead you to the stool of repentance? Did He ever cause you to see how basely you have treated your God and how shamefully you have neglected your Savior? Did He ever make you bemoan yourself for your iniquities? There is no way to heaven but by the weeping-cross. He who never felt the burden

of his sin will yet be crushed beneath its enormous weight when, like some tottering cliff in judgment's dreadful hour, it will fall upon him and grind him to powder! No man ever goes to the chamber of true repentance till the Holy Spirit leads him there, but every child of God knows what it is to look on Him whom he has pierced and mourn for his sin. Holy sorrow for sin is as indispensable as faith in the atoning blood, and the same Spirit who gives us peace through the great sacrifice, also works in us a hearty grief for having grieved the Lord. If you have, from your youth up, never felt any special mourning for sin, then may God begin the gracious work in your heart, for salvation is certainly not worked in *you*. You *must* have repentance, for repentance is absolutely necessary to the divine life. "Except you repent you shall all likewise perish." The prodigal must cry, "Father, I have sinned!" The publican must smite his breast and pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner." As well destroy one of the valves of the heart and yet hope to live as take away repentance which is the inseparable life-companion of faith. A dry-eyed faith is no faith at all. When a man has his face towards Jesus, his back is necessarily turned on his sins. As well look for spring in the garden without the snowdrop as look for grace in the heart without penitence. That faith which is not accompanied by repentance is a spurious faith, and not the faith of God's elect, for no man ever trusts Christ till he feels he needs a Savior. And he cannot have felt that he needs a Savior unless he has been wearied with the burden of his sin. The Holy Spirit leads men, first, to repentance.

He leads them, at the same time, while they think little of themselves, to *think much of Jesus*. Were you ever led to the cross, beloved? Did you ever stand there and feel the burden fall off your shoulders and roll into the Redeemer's sepulcher? When Dr. Neale, the eminent Ritualist, took John Bunyan's, "Pilgrim's Progress," and Romanized it, he represented the Pilgrim as coming to a certain bath into which he was plunged and washed—and then his burden was washed away! He explains this to be the bath of "baptism," though I have never yet seen in any Ritualistic church a baptistery large enough to wash a pilgrim! However, according to this doctored edition of the allegory, Christian was washed in the laver of "baptism" and all his sins were thus removed. That is the High Church mode of getting rid of sin! John Bunyan's way—the true way—is to lose it at the cross! Now, mark what happened. According to Dr. Neale's, "Pilgrim's Progress," that burden *grew again* on the pilgrim's back, and I do not wonder that it did, for a burden which "baptism" can remove is sure to come again! But the burden which is lost at the cross never appears again, forever! There is no effectual cleansing for sin except by faith in that matchless atonement offered once and for all on the bloody tree! And as many as are led there by the Spirit of God are the sons of God! The Spirit of God never led a man to think little of Christ and much of *priests*. The Spirit of God never led a man to think little of the atoning blood and of simple faith in it, and much of outward forms and ceremonies! The Spirit of God sinks the man and lifts up the Savior! He lowers flesh and blood into the grave and gives to man new life in the risen Lord who also

has ascended up on high! "He shall glorify Me," said Christ of the Comforter, and that, indeed, is the Comforter's office.

Now, my dear friends, has the Spirit ever made the Lord Jesus glorious in your eyes? Brethren, this is the one point above all others. If the Holy Spirit has never made Christ precious to you, you know nothing about Him! If He has not lifted Jesus up and sunk your own confidences, if He has not made you feel that Christ is all you need and that you find more than all in Him, then He has never worked a divine change in your heart. Repentance and faith must stand gazing upon the bleeding Savior or else hope will never join them and bring peace as his companion.

When the Spirit has glorified Jesus, He leads us to know *other truths*. The Holy Spirit leads the sons of God into all truth. Others go astray after this falsehood or that, but the sheep of God will not hear the voice of strange leaders—their ears are closed to their flatteries—"A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." Beloved, no lie is of the truth of God, and no man who receives a lie has been led by the Spirit of God into it, let him say what he may. On the other hand, truth is like a closed chamber to the unregenerate man. He may read the table of contents of the precious storehouse, but into that secret room he cannot enter—there is One that has the key of David, who opens and no man shuts—and the key with which He opens is the power of the Holy Spirit! When He opens up a doctrine to a man, the man learns it aright, but he never can know it otherwise. You may go to college and sit at the feet of the most learned Gamaliel of the day, but you can never know the truth of God in the heart unless the Holy Spirit shall teach you. We never know a truth in the power of it till it is burned into our soul, as with a hot iron, by an experience of its power, or engraved as upon brass by the mystic revelation of the Spirit. Only the Spirit of God can interweave the truth with the heart and make it part and parcel of ourselves, so that it is in us and we are in it. Have you thus been led into the truth of God? If so, give God the glory, for thus the Spirit of God certifies your adoption!

The children of God are led not only into knowledge, but into *love*. They are brought to feel the warmth of love as well as to see the light of truth. The Spirit of God causes every true-born son of God to burn with love to the rest of the family. He who is a stranger to Christian love is a stranger to divine grace. Brethren, we have our disputes, for we dwell where it must be that offenses come. But we should be slow to take offense and slower, still, to give it, for we are one in Christ Jesus and our hearts are knit together by His Spirit. I take it that no honest man ought to hold his tongue concerning any of the errors of the day—it is a dishonest way of cultivating ease for yourself and gaining a popularity not worth the having! We must speak the truth whether we offend or please, but this is to be done *in* love and *because* of love. God save us from that suggestion of Satan which advises us to speak only those soft things which please men's ears, for he who gives way to this persuasion is a traitor to truth and to the souls of men. The true man of God must speak against every evil and false way—but there beats in his heart a strong affection to every child of God—whatever his errors and his faults may be. The knife

of the surgeon is mercifully cruel to the cancer, not out of ill-will to his patient, but out of an honest desire to benefit him. Such affectionate faithfulness we have need to cultivate. Love to the saints is the token of the saints. There is an inner church of God's own elect within every one of the Christian denominations—and this church is made up of men spiritually enlightened—who know the marrow and mystery of the gospel. Whenever they meet, however diversified may be their views, they recognize one another by a sort of sacred code—the one Spirit, which quickens them all alike, leaps within them as it recognizes the one life in the bosoms of others. Despite their mental divergences, ecclesiastical associations, and doctrinal differences, spiritual men no sooner hear the password and catch the mystic sign, than they cry, "Give me your hand, my brother, for my heart is even as your heart. The Spirit of God has led me and he has led you. And in our way, we tread step by step together. Therefore, let us have fellowship with each other." The outsiders of the camp, the mixed multitude that come up out of Egypt with our Israel, fall both into fighting and lusting—but the children of the living God, who make the central bodyguard of the ark of the Lord, are one in heart with each other and must be so. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

The Holy Spirit leads us into *intense love for the souls of sinners*. If any man shall say, "It is no business of mine whether men are lost or saved," the Spirit of God never led him into such inhumanity. Hearts of iron have never felt the touch of the Spirit of love. If ever a preacher's spirit and teaching legitimately lead you to the conclusion that you may view the damnation of your fellow men with complacency or indifference, you may be sure that the Spirit of God never led him or you in that direction! The devil has more to do with some men's pitiless theology than they imagine. Christ's eyes wept over the sinner's doom—may the Lord save us from thinking of it in any other spirit! He who does not love his fellow man whom he has seen—how can he love God whom he has not seen? Does God look with satisfaction upon the ruin of our race? Did He not love men so well that He gave His only-begotten Son for them? And will He have His own children cold, stoical, and indifferent to the loss of human souls? Beloved, if we dwell with Cain and cry, "Am I my brother's keeper?" the Spirit of God never led us there! He leads us into tenderness, sympathy, compassion, and tearful effort, if by any means we may save some.

Further, the Spirit of God leads the sons of God into *holiness*. I shall not attempt to define what holiness is. That is best seen in the lives of holy men. Can it be seen in your lives? Beloved, if you are of a fierce, unforgiving spirit, the Holy Spirit never led you there. If you are proud and swaggering, the Holy Spirit never led you. If you are covetous and lustful after worldly gain, the Holy Spirit never led you there. If you are false in your statements and unjust in your actions, the Holy Spirit never led you there. If I hear of a professor of religion in the ballroom or the theater, I know that the Holy Spirit never led him there. If I find a child of God mixing with the ungodly, using their speech and doing their actions, I am

persuaded the Holy Spirit never led him there. But if I see a man living as Christ would have lived, loving and tender, fearless, brave, honest, and in all things minding to keep a good conscience before God and men, I hope that the Spirit of God has led him. If I see that man devout before his God and full of integrity before his fellow men, then, I hope and believe that the Spirit of God is His leader and influences his character. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." I do not wish to speak sharply, but I feel that I must speak plainly—and I feel bound to say that there is far too much hypocrisy among professing Christian people. Many wear the name of Christian and have nothing else that is Christian about them. It is sorrowful that it should be so, but so it is—false professors have lowered the standard of Christian character and made the church so like the world that it is hard to say where one begins and the other ends. We exercise church discipline as best we can, but, for all that, there is a seed of mischief which does not develop into open and overt sin which we cannot remove by discipline, for we are forbidden to root up the tares lest we root up the wheat with them. Men and brethren, we must be holy! It is of no use our talking about being orthodox in belief—we must be orthodox in *life*—and if we are not, the soundest creed will only increase our damnation! I hear men boast that they are Nonconformists to the backbone, as if that were the essential matter! Better far be Christians to the *heart!* What is the use of ecclesiastical Nonconformity if the heart is still conformed to the world? Another man will glory that he is a Conformist, but what is the good of *that* unless he is conformed to the image of Christ? Holiness is the main consideration, and if we are not led into it by the Spirit of holiness, neither are we the sons of God!

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit leads those who are the children of God into *vital godliness*—the mystic essence of spiritual life. For instance, the Holy Spirit leads the saints to prayer, which is the vital breath of their souls. Whenever they get true access to the Mercy Seat, it is by His power. The Holy Spirit leads them to search the Word and opens their understandings to receive it. He leads them into meditation and the chewing of the cud of the truth. He leads them into fellowship with Himself and with the Son of God. He lifts them right away from worldly cares into heavenly contemplations. He leads them away to the heavenly places, where Christ sits at the right hand of God and where His saints reign with Him. Beloved, have you ever felt these leadings? I am talking of them, but do you *understand* them? Are these things matters of constant experience with you? It is easy to say, "Yes, I know what you mean." Have you *felt* them? Are these everyday things with you? As the Lord lives, if you have not been led into prayer and into communion with God, the Spirit of God is not in you, and you are none of His!

The Spirit of God, moreover, leads the sons of God into *usefulness*—some in one path and some in another—while a few are conducted into very eminent service and into self-consecration of the highest order. We

bless God for missionaries, who have been led of the Spirit of God, among the wildest tribes to preach Jesus Christ. We thank God for holy women who, at home, have been led into the darkest parts of this city to labor among the most fallen and depraved, to lift up Christ before them that He might lift them up to Himself. Blessed are those men and women who are led by the Spirit of God into labors more abundant, for the more abundant shall be their joy. I think I ought to remind you all that if you are doing nothing for Jesus, the Spirit of God has never led you into this *idleness*. If you eat the fat and drink the sweet in the house of God, but never do a hand's turn for the household, the Spirit of God cannot have taught you this abominable *sloth!* There is a something for every one of us to do—a talent committed to the charge of every believer—and if we have the Spirit of God dwelling in us, He will tell us what the Lord has appointed us to perform. He will strengthen us for the doing of it and set His seal and blessing upon it when it is done. Those dead branches of the vine, which yield no clusters for the Lord, either by patience in suffering or activity in working, have no evidence that they are of the household of faith! Those who take no part in labors for Jesus can hardly hope that they will ultimately be partakers in His glory with Him.

Thus have I, in a plain manner, without diving too deeply into the matter, given you an answer to the question, "Where does the Spirit of God lead the sons of God?"

II. I shall now answer another question with still greater brevity—HOW DOES THE SPIRIT LEAD THE SONS OF GOD?

The reply would be this—*the Spirit of God operates upon our spirits mysteriously*. We cannot explain His mode of operation, except that we shall probably be right if we conclude that He operates upon our spirits somewhat in the same way in which our spirits operate upon other men's spirits, only after a nobler sort. Now, how do I influence the spirit of my friend? I do it, usually, by imparting to him something which I know, which I hope will have power over his mind by suggesting motives to him and so influencing his acts. I cannot operate upon my neighbor's mind mechanically. No tool can touch the heart. No hand can shape the mind. We act upon matter by machinery, but upon mind, by argument, by *reason,* by instruction, and so we endeavor to fashion men as we desire. *One great instrument which the Holy Spirit uses upon the mind is the Word of God*. The Word, as we have it printed in the Bible, is the great instrument in the hand of the Spirit for leading the children of God in the right way. If you want to know what you ought to do, say as the old Scotchman used to say to his wife, "Reach down yon Bible." That is the map of the way—the heavenly pilgrim's knapsack guide—and if you are led by the Word of God, the Spirit of God is with the Word, and works through it, and you are led by the Spirit of God. Quote chapter and verse for an action, and unless you have twisted the passage, you may rest assured you have acted rightly. Be sure that such-and-such a thing is a command of God written in the Book, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and you do not need a voice of thunder from heaven or an angelic whisper—you have a more

sure Word of prophecy, unto which you will do well if you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place.

The Spirit of God also speaks through His ministers. The word preached is often blessed, as well as the written Word, but this can only be the case when the word preached is in conformity with the written Word. At times, God's ministers seem to give the written Word its own voice, so that it sounds forth as if just spoken by the seer who originally received it. As they speak, it drops into the ears like honey from the comb. It leaps forth like water from the wellhead! And at such times, it goes into the heart fresh and warm, with even a greater energy than when we read it alone in our chamber. How often do we feel, when we read a truth in a book, (even though that book is God's Word), our sluggish condition prevents its having such power over us as it has when a man of God, who has experienced it and tasted it, and handled it, speaks of it as the outpouring of his own soul? May God grant that the ministry which you usually attend may be to you the voice of God; may it be guidance to your feet, comfort to your heart, invigoration to your faith, and refreshment to your soul! And while you are sitting in the house of prayer may you feel, "That word is for me. I came here not knowing what to do, but I have received direction. I was faint and weary, but I have obtained consolation and strength. The voice of the pastor has been as the oracle of God to my soul, and now, I go my way comforted as Hannah did when the Lord's servant had spoken peace to her soul."

Upon another point, I would speak with great caution and would have you think of it with more caution, still, for it is a matter which has been sadly abused and turned to fanatical purposes. The Spirit of God does, I believe, *directly, even apart from the Word, speak in the hearts of the saints*. There are inward monitions which are to be devoutly obeyed. There are suggestions, mysterious and secret, which must be implicitly followed. It is not a subject for common talk, but is meant for the ear of the intelligent believer who will not misunderstand us. There will come to you, sometimes, you know not why, certain inward checks, such as Paul received when he essayed to go into Mysia, but the Spirit suffered him not. There is a certain act which you might do or might not do, but an impulse comes upon you which seems to say, "Not that, or not now." Do not violate that inward restraint! "Quench not the Spirit." At another time, a proper thing, a fit thing, will have been forgotten by you for a time, but it comes upon you strongly that it is to be done at once—and for some reason you cannot shake off the impression. Do no violence to that impulse! It is not to every man that the Holy Spirit speaks in such a way, but He has His favored ones, and these must jealously guard the privilege, for perhaps if they are deaf when He speaks, He may never again speak to them in that way. If we render reverent obedience to divine monitions they will become far more common with us. "Why," says one, "you run into Quakerism." I cannot help that! If this is Quakerism, I am so far a Quaker! Names do not concern me one way or another. You, each one, know whether your personal experience gives confirmation to what I have advanced, or otherwise. There let the question end, for, mark

you, I advance this with caution and do not set up such monitions as indispensable signs of a son of God.

There is a story told, (and many such some of us could tell almost as striking), of a certain friend who, one night, was influenced to take his horse from the stable and ride some six or seven miles to a certain house where a person lived whom he had never seen! He arrived at dead of night, knocked at the door, and was answered by the master of the house, who seemed to be in great confusion of mind. The midnight visitor said, "Friend, I have been sent to you. I know not why, but surely the Lord has some reason for having sent me to you. Is there anything peculiar about your circumstances?" The man, struck with amazement, asked him to come upstairs, and there showed him a halter tied to a beam. He was putting the rope about his neck to commit suicide when a knock sounded at the door. He resolved that he would go down and answer the call, and then return and destroy himself; but the friend, whom God had sent, talked to him, brought him to a cooler mind, and helped him in the financial difficulty which embarrassed him, and the man lived to be an honorable Christian man. I solemnly declare that monitions equally powerful have guided me and their results have been remarkable to me, at any rate. For the most part, these are secrets between God and my own soul. Neither am I eager to break the seal and tell them to others. There are too many swine about for us to be very lavish with our pearls. If we were obedient to such impulses, if we did not save suicides, we might save souls and might often be, in the hands of God, as angels sent from heaven! But we are like the horse and the mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle—we are not tender enough to be sensitive to the divine influence when it comes, and so the Lord does not please to speak to many of us in this way so frequently as we would desire. Still, it is true that, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God," however He may lead them, "they are the sons of God."

Let me here remark that being, *"led* by the Spirit of God," is a remarkable expression. It does not say, "As many as are *driven* by the Spirit of God." No, the devil is a *driver,* and when he enters either into men or into hogs, he drives them furiously. Remember how the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea. Whenever you see a man fanatical and wild, whatever spirit is in him, it is *not* the Spirit of Christ! The Spirit of Christ is forcible. It works mightily, but it is a *quiet* Spirit. It is not an eagle, but a dove. He comes as a rushing wind and fills the house where the disciples are sitting, but at the same time, He comes not as a whirlwind from the wilderness to smite the four corners of the habitation, or it would become a ruin. He comes as a flame of fire sitting upon each of the favored ones, but it is not a flame of fire that burns the house and destroys Jerusalem. No, the Spirit of God is gentle! He does not drive, but leads. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The Spirit treats us honorably in thus working. He does not deal with us as with dumb, driven cattle, or soulless waves of the sea. He treats us as intelligent beings, made for thought and reflection. He leads us as a man guides his child, or as one leads his fellow—and we are

honored by subjecting our minds and wills to so divine a Spirit. Never is the will truly free until the Holy Spirit sweetly subdues it to willing obedience.

Thus the Spirit of God works, though we cannot explain the method, for that is a thing too wonderful for us, and sooner may we know the path of an eagle in the air, or the way of a serpent upon a rock. As we cannot walk in search of the springs of the sea, so is this, also, hidden from all living. We have said somewhat upon the subject, and as far as we can, have answered the question, "How does the Spirit of God lead the children of God?" But we are of yesterday and know nothing. And, therefore, confessing our ignorance, we pass on.

III. The last question is, WHEN DOES THE SPIRIT LEAD THE SONS OF GOD? Ah, brethren, that question needs anxious answering.

The Spirit of God *would always* lead the sons of God, but, alas, there are times when even children of God will not be led! They are willful and headstrong, and start aside. The healthy condition of a child of God is to be always led by the Spirit of God. Mark this—led by the Spirit everyday—not on Sundays only! Nor alone at periods set apart for prayer—but during every minute of every hour of everyday! We ought to be led by the Spirit in little things as well as in great matters, for observe, if we were led by the Spirit all our lives in all matters, yet if only one action apart from the Spirit were suffered to run to its full results, it would ruin us! The mercy is that the Lord restores our souls, but there is never a single hour when a Christian can afford to wander from the way of the Spirit. If you have a guide along an intricate pathway and you allow him to conduct you for half an hour, and then say, "Now, I shall direct myself for the next five minutes," in that short space you will lose the benefit of having a guide at all! It is clear that a pilot who only occasionally directs the ship is very little better than none. If you were traversing an unknown and difficult pathway, it would render all directions useless if you were to say, "They told me to turn to the right at this tower, but I mean to try the left." That one turning will affect the whole of your later journey. If we err, and are really sons of God, our divine Leader will make us retrace our steps with bitter tears and feel what an evil and bitter thing it is to have chosen our own delusions. If we use our divine Leader wisely, we shall always follow Him. Child of God, the Spirit must lead you in everything! "Well, but," you say, *"will* He?" Ah, "Will He?" Yes, to your astonishment! When you are in difficulties, consult the Holy Spirit in the Word. Hear what God speaks in the inspired volume and if no light comes from there, kneel down and pray. When you see a signpost in a country road, and it tells you which way to go, you are glad to follow its directions. But, if in your perplexities you see no signpost, what are you to do? *Pray*. Cast yourself upon the divine guide and you shall make no mistake, for even if you happen to pick the roughest road, it will be the right one if you have selected it with holy caution and in the fear of God. Beloved, the Lord will never let a vessel be dashed upon the rocks whose tiller has been given into His hands. Give up the helm to God and your

boat will thread the narrow winding channel of life, avoid every sandbank and sunken rock, and arrive safely at the fair havens of eternal bliss!

The question—when are the sons of God led by the Spirit? is to be answered thus—when they are as they should be, they are always distinctly led by Him; and though, owing to sin in them, they are not always obedient to the same degree, yet the power which usually influences their lives is the Spirit of God.

Now I close, using the text thus. First, as a *test*. Am I a child of God? If so, I am led by the Spirit. Am I led by the Spirit? I am afraid some of you never think of that matter. By whom are you led? Hundreds of religious people are led by their minister or by a Christian friend and so far, so good, for them. But their religion will be a failure unless they are led by the Spirit. Let me put the question again that you may not shirk it—Are you led by the Spirit? If you are, you are a child of God—if not, you are none of His.

That gives me a second use of the text, namely, the use of *consolation*. If you are a child of God, you will be led by the Spirit. Now, are you in doubt tonight? Are you embarrassed? Are you in difficulties? Then, the sons of God are led by the Spirit and you will be led. Perhaps you are looking a long way ahead and you are afraid of difficulties in your old age, or at the death of a relative. Now, God has not given us eyes to pry into the future—so what is the use of our peering where we cannot see? Leave it all to your heavenly Father and you will be unerringly led by the Holy Spirit! When you come to the place where you thought there would be a difficulty, very likely there will be none. "Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?" said the holy women. But when they came to the sepulcher, lo, the stone was rolled away already! Go on as a child of God, walking by faith, with the full assurance that the path of faith, if not an easy one, will always be a safe one—and all will be well and you will be led in a right way to a city of habitations.

The last word of all is, the text is an *assurance*. If you are led by the Spirit of God, then you are most certainly a son of God. Can you say, tonight, "I do yield myself up to the Lord's will; I am not perfect, I wish I were. I am burdened with a thousand infirmities, but yet if the Lord will teach me, I am willing to learn. If He will have patience with me, I will strive to follow Him. Oh, what would I give to be perfectly holy! I long to be pure within; I wish above all things else in this world that I may never grieve my God, but walk with Him in the light as He is in the light, and have fellowship with Him, while the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses me from all sin"? My brother, my sister, be well assured that none ever longed like that but a child of God! Flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you. No soul, except an heir of heaven, ever had such wishes, aspirations, and groaning after holiness, and such sorrow over failures and mistakes. The text does not say, "He who runs in the Spirit is a son of God," but he that is *led* by the Spirit of God. Now, we may stumble while we are being led. A man may go very slowly while he is being led. He may go on crutches as he is being led. He may even crawl on his hands and knees while he is being led. But none of these absolutely

prevent his being truly led! With all your weaknesses and infirmities, the question still is—Are you led by the Spirit of God? If you are, all your infirmities and failures are forgiven you for Christ's sake, and your being led is the mark of your being born from above! Go home and rejoice in your sonship, and ask God, if you have been weak, to make you strong. If you have been lame, ask Him to heal you. And, if you have crept along on your hands and knees, ask Him to help you to walk uprightly. But, after all that, bless Him that His Spirit does lead you! If you can only walk, ask Him to make you run. And if you can run, ask Him to make you mount on wings as eagles! Do not be satisfied with anything short of the highest attainments and at the same time, if you have not reached them, do not despair! Remember that in most families, there are babes as well as men and women—the little child in long clothes carried in the arms, and laid on the breast, is just as dear to the parent as the son, who in the fullness of his manhood, marches by his father's side and takes of his share in the battle of life. You are sons of God if you are led by the Spirit, however small your stature and feeble your grace. The age, strength, or education of the man is not essential to his sonship—the trueness of his birth is the all-important matter. See to it that you are led by the Spirit, or your parentage is not from above!

If you have been condemned by this sermon, then fly away to Jesus, and penitently and trustfully rest in Him! May the Spirit of God lead you to do that, and you are then a child of God. May He bless you now. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans 8:1-17.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—722, 448, 456.

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OPENING THE MOUTH
NO. 1221

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

"Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."
Psalm 81:10.

SOME have considered that our text contains an allusion to a singular custom of showing favor which has been occasionally adopted by eastern monarchs. It is not a very long time ago that a former Shah of Persia bade an ambassador, who was in great favor with him, open his mouth, and when he had done so, the monarch filled it with pearls and gems of great value which, of course, were a present to him. This certainly affords an illustration of the text, even if the passage contains no allusion to it. If we will but open the mouth of our desire, God will give to us mercies infinitely more precious than the rarest gems. I guarantee you that if any emperor or king should bid us open our mouths that we might have them filled with diamonds, we should be very sure to extend them to their largest possible capacity and therefore, this custom may serve as a good enforcement of the text. Open your mouth wide, for God will not fill it with secondary things, but will satisfy you with divine mercies of exceeding preciousness.

I think, however, that the illustration which we have mentioned is far fetched and I seldom like an explanation of a passage of Scripture which demands the introduction of a very rare incident. Illustrations are used in Scripture not to perplex us, but to render the teaching more clear. We will, therefore, look to some more common act of eastern life for the explanatory allusion. Those who have been at the tables of the Orientals know that there is another very common custom which meets the case. The host, when you are at supper, will take the fattest portions of the lamb, if that happens to be the meat, and he will apportion them to you. He may even take up the fattest and choicest morsels in his hand and asking you to open your mouth, he will place them in it. This is a common practice of the country and lies at the bottom of many a Scriptural expression. "Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles." "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips," and a great many other texts which I might quote, all allude to that custom. A man greatly beloved would be asked to open his mouth wide that he might receive a very large portion of the dainties before him.

I confess, however, that I am not much enamored with even this simile. I believe it to be a valuable side light, but I had rather, after all, look to nature for an illustration than dwell upon a custom which is purely

oriental and is hardly relished by our western delicacy. Come with me, then, to the woods, where the songsters of the grove have built their habitations. Look at the little birds in the nest, for *there* you have the text! They are newly hatched and unable to feed themselves and therefore, they are wholly dependent upon the parent birds. When I have peered into their abode, they seemed, to me, to be all mouth and beak, with but faint trace of wings! If you put out your finger, or dangle a worm near them, no feature strikes you but those gaping ravenous mouths! When the mother bird brings food, she never has to ask the little ones to open their mouths wide—her only difficulty is to fill the great width which they are quite sure to present to her! Appetite and eagerness are never lacking, they are utterly insatiable. If you need my text before your eyes in living realization, only picture a nest of little birds reaching up their mouths and all opening them as wide as they can. Instead of the poor little mother bird that has been hard at work to gather a scanty portion for one of them, you have an infinite God filling all open mouths and bidding them open again, for He is able to fill them, however many they may be, or however vast their needs! It is that great Lord of ours of whom it is written, "He shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust," who now speaks to us, as little birds, and says, "Open your mouths wide, for I will fill them." That is, at any rate, a pleasing illustration of the text, even if it is not the exact idea which was in the psalmist's mind.

The text divides itself into *the exhortation* and *the promise*.

I. The exhortation is, "OPEN YOUR MOUTH WIDE."

How are we to do this? The precept relates to *prayer* and desire and the like. But there is also an exhortation to *labor after a great sense of need*. For what makes a bird open its mouth wide but its hunger? The young ravens cry because they need food and nobody will ever open his mouth wide for spiritual blessings until he has a very deep and solemn sense of his need before God. You sinners will never pray till you know you need something—why should you? All the prayers offered by people who have no needs are so much vain complimenting of God. If you have no sense of need, how can you pray? Would you knock at the door of charity and then tell the good man of the house that you require nothing of him? Is not that man an arrant trifler who rings the surgery bell, but tells the surgeon that he has nothing the matter with him and does not need his care? Prayers that are not based upon a sense of need are mockeries.

And I say this to Christians, too. You never pray, brethren, except when you are in need—and rest assured, when you think you have no more needs, you have lost the strongest motive for prayer and the main element of power in it. You may feel, at times, that there is little to request on your own account and you may rejoice that the Lord has filled you to the full for the time being, but then, there are the needs of the church and of the world—and these should press upon your heart as if they were your own. You cannot pray without a sense of need; it is out of

the question. The man who comes to you begging because he has not a night's lodging, or has not broken his fast all day, how well he begs! You do not need to send him to school to learn the art of begging—his hungry belly makes him eloquent—and so, when a man feels he must have heavenly blessings or be lost! Or when he feels that, being saved, he must still be kept by daily grace, or else he will start aside. Or when he feels that his work of faith and labor of love will be good for nothing without the divine blessing. Or when he feels that the church must have the anointing of the Holy One and that the world needs a visitation from God—when any of these needs solemnly weigh upon his soul—then it is that he prays! The man does not open his mouth wide till he is conscious of a great need, which only the Lord, Himself, can supply. I exhort you, therefore, dear brethren, to shake off the idea of being rich and increased in goods, and having need of nothing, for this proud notion will strangle prayer! You are weakness itself and emptiness itself—and a mass of sin and misery—apart from God your Father, and Christ your Redeemer, and the Spirit the indweller! And when you know this, *then* you will open your mouth wide. Airy notions about having reached a higher life and being perfect will make fine gentlemen of you, but will spoil you for being beggars at the Mercy Seat. The mouth of dire necessity, God always fills, but pride has short results, for is it not one of the proverbs of His kingdom, "He has filled the hungry with good things; but the rich He has sent empty away"?

Then, dear friends, next seek after an intense and vehement *desire*, for the mouth is opened wide only when the desire becomes intense. You know how David says, "I opened my mouth and panted." You have seen a dog after a long run, how he stands with opened mouth panting for life and breath. Oh, that we had desires after God and divine things strong enough to make us thus open our mouth and pant! We may never have seen a stag *in extremis,* but I dare say David had. He had seen it in the fierce hunt when it longed to have its smoking sides in the water brooks and to drink long draughts, and he said, "As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God." Nothing puts such energy into prayer as intense anguish of desire. Desire comes out of a sense of need, and in proportion as the necessity is overwhelming, the fervency of the desire will be vehement. My brethren, we *have* not, because, although we ask, we use a kind of asking which is as though we asked not! An old Puritan says, "He that prays to God without fervor, asks to be denied." There is a way of asking for a thing in which the person to whom the request is made finds it very easy to decline the request. But persons in dire need understand how to put their case so that only a very hard-hearted person could say, "No." They know how to place their petition in such a way that the request wins, not merely because of the rightness of the petition, but also because of the very style in which it is put. We must learn how to pray with strong cries and tears, for there are mercies which cannot be gained by any other mode of supplicating. Did you ever try your little child by holding fast in your hand something that he want-

ed? You wished to see whether he had perseverance enough to pull open your fingers, one by one, to get what he wished for. And you have shut your hand very tightly and tried his endeavors so long that at last you have seen the big round tears stand in his eyes—and then you have held out no longer. The tears open your hand! I believe that our heavenly Father exercises us in that manner at times until He gets us right down to this—that we must have it and we shall die if we do not have it because it is for His glory—and we have His promise for it. When we come to that point, we are where the Lord meant us to be! And having brought us there, He gives us our desire, having already doubled the blessing by stirring us up to vehemence. Open your mouth wide, man! Do not play at praying! Nobody is saved between sleeping and waking—and nobody wins rich blessings by being lukewarm. I have heard mothers say of a child that, "He cried all over," and that is the right way to pray! Let your whole man wrestle with the Most High. "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." Deep necessity and urgent desire are two great openers of the mouth in prayer.

To my mind, the heart of the text may be compressed into such words as these—*Ask for large things*. Do not restrict your requests and pray with bated breath, but plead with the great God for great things, such as it will be to His glory to bestow. In this point, we too often fail. I remember praying before I preached in a certain provincial town and asking the Lord that He would enable at least one poor soul to lay hold on Christ. I went home to tea with a very worthy brother, and a fine old Christian gentleman at the tea table said to me very kindly, "I do not know what you did with your faith this afternoon when you were praying, for you asked the Lord to give you one soul, but the sermon was such that I saw no reason why it should not be blessed to a thousand. I could not say, 'Amen,' to such a very narrow prayer as that. Why," said he, "man alive! With such a gospel as you were preaching, and such a crowd of people, you might as well have asked for a thousand souls as one." I thought so, too, and confessed the poverty of my prayer. Brethren, many of us have made great mistakes and have shut ourselves up in the cells of poverty when our feet might have stood in a large room! We have laid down pipes too small to bring us a full current of blessing. We have half-killed our prayers by lacing them too tight, even as foolish mothers kill their daughters. Our cup is small and we blame the fountain! The Israelites, according to this psalm, did not believe in God as they should. They did not expect their enemies to be driven out, nor hope to be fed with the finest of the wheat. They thought their God was a commonplace God, like the gods of Egypt. They did not know what a rich, generous, great-hearted, large-giving God He is and so they failed in asking and therefore, they did not obtain the richest blessings of grace. Christians should elevate the scale of their praying and enlarge their requests and never let it be said that they lose blessings solely by failing to ask for them.

Dear brethren, we may well ask great things, for we are asking of *a great God* who fills immensity, who has all power, who has all blessings

in His stores! If we were to ask Him for a world, it is no more for Him to bestow a world than it would be for us to give away a crumb! When the poor widow gave her two mites, she gave her all and knowing her poverty, one would ask very little of her and expect even less! But when you ask of a *king,* you do not expect two mites from him! That poor woman who said, "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the master's table," was far nearer the mark than most of us, for much as she valued the inestimable blessing which she sought, she reckoned it as being *nothing* more *than a crumb* as it came from God! The greatest blessings which can yet be received through Jesus Christ, though we cannot prize them enough and they are beyond all calculation, precious, are *little* in comparison with the unspeakable gift of His Son, which has already been bestowed! Open your mouth wide, for wide are the supplies of love, and boundless the riches of the sovereign grace of so great a God!

Besides His greatness, remember His *goodness*. The good Lord delights to give—it does not diminish His possessions, but affords Him satisfaction. The sun is just as bright, notwithstanding all his shining, as if he had stored up his light. It is the sun's nature to shine and it may as well shine upon us as anywhere else! And it is God's delight to distribute His goodness and bless His creatures—and therefore, we may well ask large things from One whose very nature it is to scatter His fullness among the poor and needy. Remember, dear brethren, what He has already done for us. "I am the Lord your God, which brought you up out of Egypt," says He, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." See what He has done! Is it a trifle to have had all your sins forgiven, to have received a new heart and a right spirit, to have been saved by the precious blood of His dear Son? If we made our prayers to scale, if they were proportioned to the measure of God's past favors, what great prayers they would be! I love a gospel on a grand scale. I cannot bear to see anything about it lowered, or cut down—not even the terrors of it. I am certain that those who make out the punishment of the wicked to be upon a smaller scale, must, before long, diminish the glory of the atonement and bring down their conceptions of God, Himself, for they are all proportioned. But you and I, who see everything to be grand, vast, infinite, ought to open our mouths wide, to keep our praying somewhat proportionate to the condition of things around us.

Remember, beloved brethren, what *great pleas* you have to urge when you come before God. Your main argument is the gift of His dear Son. Now, if you pray according to that plea, you will have this consideration to support you—"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"? What a word is that—*"all* things"! Your prayers cannot outrun those comprehensive words—*"all things."* Should you not open your mouth wide? Would you employ before God the magnificent plea of the atoning blood and then come down to ask for pence and halfpence, when you might as well have countless riches? Will you ask for enough grace to keep you out of hell, when you might have grace enough to make you

habitually in the suburbs of heaven? Will you ask to be useful to two or three, when you might, with the same plea, prevail to be a spiritual benefactor to hundreds and thousands? He deserves to be poor who has no desire to be rich and will not even take the trouble to ask for wealth. He who will not so much as open his mouth must expect no pity should he starve. Oh, beloved, do not pinch yourselves, but ask the largest conceivable blessings! Spread your most capacious net, for the multitude of fish will fill it! Dig the deepest pools, for the rain will brim them! Bring forth all your empty vessels, for the oil shall be multiplied till all are overflowing.

Beloved, let us ask *great things for ourselves*. I do not mean let us ask great *temporal* blessings—we may leave everything of that kind with God and this is the limit He puts to such prayer—"Give us day by day our daily bread." Having food and raiment let us be content. But as for *spiritual* things, ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. Here the treasury has neither lock nor key! The lid is taken off from the jewelry box—help yourself—and if you are straitened, you are not straitened in God, you are straitened in your own heart! I beseech you, young Christians, do not be satisfied with getting as much grace as the people you live with, who profess to be Christians, for there are hosts of them that I would not like to risk my soul with. I am not their judge, but *I think, I think* it will be an extraordinary thing if they get into heaven. I know some very loud-mouthed talkers whose actions are not pretty at all, and the less said about them the better. I mean some *professors* when I speak thus. I mean members of churches. Now, do not you young people make them your standard—get far beyond them! Outstrip the ordinary run of Christians who are consistent and no more. I would urge you to seek far higher things than they possess. They are said to be "consistent," though I do not know what they are consistent with. They do nothing that is grossly wrong and they are good, ordinary, respectable people, but as to joy in the Lord and being filled with the Holy Spirit, and real faith—daring faith, love, and zeal for God's glory—and agony for the conversion of souls, why, large numbers of very consistent people know nothing about these things except when they read about them in the Bible! Surely their condition is more consistent with membership in Laodicea than in the New Jerusalem! Their consistency is not consistency with the divine will, but a miserable consistency with their own dead-and-alive profession. Oh, you that are beginners in the divine life, I pray you, be not as your fathers! Do not take any of us for a standard. We are a good-for-nothing generation, taking us all round, and there had need be a far better race springing up that shall really believe and act upon their faith! We need a generation who will so live unto God with a more intense, strong, and mighty life than most of us have ever realized. Open your mouth wide, young Christian, for a large measure of the Holy Spirit, and for a mighty fullness of the life of God, that it may be in you a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

Open your mouths wide, dear friends, and ask *great things for the church*. The church of God, I hope, is in a better condition than she was some years ago, but we have not yet learned what it is to believe in great works being done for God. There are still churches, which if they were to have half-a-dozen added to them in a year, would be intensely satisfied, if not overjoyed, instead of calling for prayer and fasting and humiliation because so few are brought to Christ. There are church members around us who do not believe in many people being converted at once. If the gospel were preached so that a dozen were brought in at one time, they would impute it to undue excitement and doubt its being the work of the Spirit of God, though we have the New Testament and the Acts of the Apostles, especially, to lead us to expect such things. There are churches to which, if God were to send a hundred converts at once, they would not receive them, but would put them through a rigid quarantine! And you may be sure our heavenly Father will not send His new-born babes to places where they will not be cheerfully admitted! There are certain churches whose modes of testing and trying are such that the young lambs would be torn to bits before they would get into the green pastures—and there would hardly be two legs and a piece of an ear left after they had passed the examination—the Good Shepherd will not send His lambs where such a tribe of wolves stand gaping for prey. Pray for the church that she may have greater faith in her God, greater belief in the gospel which she preaches, greater closeness of walk with Jesus, greater care to obey her Master's precepts—and then you may open your mouth wide and expect to see the kingdom of Christ more fully come.

Open your mouth for *this great* city. Who can think what a city we live in without desiring to be mighty in prayer for it? At this moment, Scotland is a land where religion has mighty influence and I trace it mainly to the prayers of John Knox. His mighty pleading with God anchored Scotland to the gospel and she cannot get away from it. We have urgent need to pray for England in these evil times. Many are *preying upon her;* we have need to *pray for her*. The darkness thickens—among the learned, it has blackened into Egyptian night, and among the illiterate, it is as the valley of the shadow of death. Skepticism is descending upon us like a horrible mist, chilling faith even to the very marrow of our bones. Superstition, like a feverish fog, pollutes the air. We have need to cry to the Lord to do some great work in these days—to smite His enemies upon the cheekbone—and to send forth His power among His friends. I think I have explained sufficiently that the text means ask great things.

But one more remark I must cover, and that is that many of us have need to *ask for enlarged capacities*. It would be of no use to open your mouth if you could not swallow what was put into it, or if you could not digest it after you had swallowed it. And there are many precious truths of the gospel which uninstructed believers could not digest if they knew them. Therefore, there is great need that their minds should be strengthened and fitted to feed upon strong meat—the grand truths of the covenant—the doctrines of election and predestination—the glorious facts of

the immutable love of God and the indissoluble union of the saints with Christ, and their consequent everlasting safety—all these are sublime matters which cannot be appreciated by every novice, but require a spiritually educated mind to enjoy them. Thousands of professors sneer at these eternal truths because they have not the spiritual digestion which could assimilate such grand soul-feeding meat! They remind me of little, conceited boys affecting to despise the diet of men because they, themselves, have no taste except for sugar plums and sponge cakes.

There are many mercies which persons ask for and if God were to bestow them, they would not know what to do with them! It would be like giving them a white elephant—they would not know where or how to keep it. Yonder brother asks for more talent and yet he does not use what he already has! Another brother begs the Lord to make him successful in his work, but he would be top heavy and proud, and exalted above measure if he were favored with a little success. One man craves that he may know, but his knowledge would puff him up. Another prays that he may feel, but his feelings would drown his faith! If we had more room for the Lord's gifts, we should receive more. I have half a mind to exhort you to imitate the rich fool and pull down your barns and build greater. He was a fool because he meant to gather a store of wheat and grain of the earth—but if you can build greater barns to hold the precious grace which comes from heaven, you will be wise, indeed. God will not give you what you cannot receive or put to healthy use. But, oh, pray to Him, "Lord, enlarge my heart, expand my soul and give me a nobler mind free from selfishness, less cramped with ideas of my own consequence! Make me less important, more loving, more careful for the souls of others, more ambitious for Your glory, more intensely consecrated to Your Word and will." While self hoards up its treasures, there is no room for divine things! And the surest way for our enlargement is to turn out the vile stuff. Tobiah's furniture is in the chamber of the house of the Lord and out it must go! Then there will be room for the treasure which the Master bestows.

II. The second head is the promise. "Open your mouth wide, AND I WILL FILL IT."

You might expect such a promise as that. You could not think it possible for the Lord to say, "Open your mouths for nothing." It would not be according to His usual way of procedure. He does not set His servants praying and then say somewhere behind their backs, "They shall seek My face in vain." Tantalus belongs to the heathen mythology, not to the Christian's experience. "Open your mouth wide, *and I will fill it."*

I gather from this promise, first, that *it is a promise only made to those who open their mouths wide*. Some brethren never get their mouths filled because they never open them to any extent. They ask for some little mercy and they may get it, or may not. There is no promise about such shut-mouthed prayers, but if they had opened their mouths wide, they would to a certainty have had the mouth-filling blessing. With the world, it is the less you ask for, the more likely you will be to obtain it, but

God's thoughts are not as our thoughts. With God, the more you ask, the more likely are you to be heard. Half open your mouth and it may or may not be filled, but, "Open your mouth *wide,* and I *will* fill it." We always pray well and successfully when the Spirit of God enables us to stand on elevated ground and plead on godlike terms for blessings which for value, number, and greatness are worthy of the infinite bounty of Jehovah. We are then dealing with God as He loves to be dealt with, for He is a rich and great God, and loves to be approached with great prayers and great requests. And when we draw near in that fashion, we shall be quite sure to succeed. I would encourage you, dear brethren, who seem to have failed in your supplications, to inquire whether they may not have failed because their requests were too little. God seems to say to His servant, "You have not asked enough. Come, man, you are trifling with Me! Here is My Mercy Seat—I am rich, infinitely rich, and willing to give you according to your desires—and you are asking me for mere odds and ends. Do not play with Me in this way! Ask for something which I can feel a pleasure in giving to you—something worthy of a God." "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." Should not this thought greatly strengthen us when next we draw near to God in prayer?

Remember, too, that *this is a promise given by One who can fulfill it and will.* "Open your month wide and I will fill it" is a sort of challenge. "See whether you can ask for more than I can give you." Try whether your faith can outrun your God! See whether you can expect more of God than He will bestow. Take His promise and challenge Him, and see whether He will run back from it. He promises great things and unsearchable, let your soul's necessities impel you to ask for the greatest conceivable blessings and see whether He will deny you. "Prove Me, now, says the Lord of Hosts, and see." Oh, if Israel had been in an experimenting mind, what wonders would they have seen! How would the windows of heaven have been flung back and infinite good been showered down! But they were not in a praying mood. God encouraged them to ask by the favor with which He had surrounded them, for of old He had scattered manna about their habitations, and from the smitten rock He had drawn forth flowing streams. Thus He seemed to say to them, "Oh, Israel, see how you are surrounded with miracles! Heaven and earth are made subservient to you. Nothing is too hard for Me—I open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the deserts—believe in Me and act according to the scale upon which I am acting to you—and see whether I shall fail in anything." Even so, the Lord puts it to you, dear brethren, and it is not an empty boast. He is not a man that He should lie, or the son of man that He should repent. Has He said, and shall He not do it? "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it."

Oh, what stories I could tell, here, of my own experience, if it did not seem like egotism. When I read, as I continually do, slurs put upon our prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God, and find that it has become a current opinion that there really is no such a thing as an answer to prayer, I feel indignant! Why, sirs, I am as sure that God hears *my* prayers as

I am certain that you hear me! To me, the energy of prayer is as self-evident as the weight of a substance, or the force of a motive power. The law of gravitation I might doubt, but the law that God hears prayer, I cannot! The wonder to me is that men should stand up and assert that God does not hear prayer when they cannot be supposed to know everything and dare not claim to have any very special acquaintance with prayer, itself, such as to qualify them to calculate its results. Those who deny the efficacy of prayer, never pray! No, are not *capable* of offering prevalent prayer. Why do they speak so positively? What do they know about it? How dare they, as philosophers, speak dogmatically of that which they have never tried? I can say, and I do say it honestly, that *hundreds* of times, about all sorts of things, I have taken my case to God and have obtained the desire of my heart, or something far better—and that not by mere coincidence, as these objectors assert—but in a manner palpably in reply to my pleadings.

There are multitudes of brethren here, who, from their own experience, can bear the same witness! Yet a fellow gets up who never tried prayer and says it is of no avail! We find it hard to have patience with him. How does he know? He reminds me of the Irish prisoner who was brought up for murder and half-a-dozen people swore that they had seen him do the deed. "Your Lordship," he said, "I could bring ten times as many that *didn't* see me do it." Yes, but that was no evidence at all! And in the same way, these people have the impudence to set up their theory on no better grounds than the fact that they do not pray and God does not hear them! What is the good of such evidence? We know He would not hear them if they did not pray. When He does hear simple men and women, guiltless persons who, if they were put on the witness stand, would be reckoned to be the best witnesses a court could have—is their witness to go for nothing? And others of us, whose character, I trust, would bear us through any cross-examination—are we to assert that God has answered our prayers and be prepared to die to prove our sincerity, if need be—and yet be told that men who have not tried it, and say it is not so, are philosophers and are to be believed sooner than we are? We may not be philosophers, but we are honest men and have done nothing to make our testimony unreliable. It is easy to call us fools, but hard names prove nothing but the weakness of those who use them. Take Christians as a rule and they are not less sharp-witted than skeptics. Indeed, even when they have been fanatical, they have seldom said or done such unwise things as skeptical philosophers have propounded and attempted to carry out. However, it little matters what the ungodly say, the foundation of God stands sure. Oh, brethren, we will prove the power of prayer more than ever! If we have asked and had, we will ask more and we shall have more. If we have opened our mouths and God has filled them, we will open our mouths wider and obtain a larger blessing. The very best way to put to rout the falsehood of these philosophic atheists is more real prayer—facts are unanswerable.

Christian brethren, look at the promise again. "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it," and then answer the question—*how will the Lord fill our mouth?*

First, He will fill it with *prayers*. Do you ever feel as if you could not pray? Do not yield to the feeling, for then is the *time* to pray! When you cannot pray, you *must* pray. Hold your empty mouth open before God, for the Holy Spirit to put the prayer into it. I have come away from attempting to pray and felt I did not pray. And the next time I have knelt down, I have been very fluent in prayer and yet there was more real prayer in my groaning and sighing and heaving heart when I thought I failed, than there was in the fluency of the second occasion! Open your mouth wide, dear brethren, and God will fill it with petitions of an acceptable kind. The Holy Spirit will give you "groans that cannot be uttered." No prayer excels that in which the creature feels as if it *could not* pray and *did not* pray—and yet the Creator, Himself, strives mightily within!

Then, open your mouth wide and He will fill it with *the actual blessings*. He will not merely put blessings into your hands, but He will fill your mouth with them. It is one thing to have the cup of blessing in your hand and quite another thing to drink thereof. Many a man possesses what he never enjoys—the fruit on the tree is his own, but its sweet flavor never gladdens his mouth. When the Lord, in love, bestows a blessing, He teaches us how to enjoy it! He gives us the essence of the meat, the soul of the solace, the juice of the vine, the heart of the joy—not merely the legal claim to it, but the actual enjoyment of it! This is the cream of the cream, the mercy of the mercy, the filling of the mouth with the promised good.

The Lord will also fill our mouth with *praises*. Open your mouth wide and God will fill it with songs, with shouts, with gratitude which cannot be expressed in words. Some of us know what it means to have our mouths so full of God's praises all day long that we have wanted all mankind and all the angels to help us magnify the Lord. Open your mouths wide, then, and God will fill them with prayer, with blessing, and with praise.

In conclusion, is there not very much of rebuke in this to most of us? Parents, have you prayed for the salvation of your children—vehemently and earnestly? *All* your children? Teachers in the classes, have you expected the conversion of *all* your children and prayed for it? Preachers of the gospel, have you looked for many conversions and prayed for them? Brethren who labor for Christ in any capacity, have you expected to see London converted to God and looked for it and worked for it? In gospel fisheries, we generally catch what we fish for. If we fish with a fly, we may get one fish, but if we know how to use the great dragnet, by mighty faith, we shall take 153 great fishes! And for all that, the net will not be broken! Open your mouth wide, brethren, and be rebuked to think you have not opened it wide before.

But is there not also a word here of consolation to the sinner? "Open your mouth wide," says God, even to you, "and I will fill it." What do you need, sinner? "Well, I want a little comfort." Do not ask for *that,* brother. Ask for the Lord Jesus Christ at once. "Open your mouth wide." "Oh, I want a little peace. I am so troubled." Do not ask for *that,* brother. Ask for a whole Christ and a perfect salvation now. "I want to feel some measure of impression under this sermon." Do not pray for *that,* sister. Ask God for a new heart and a right spirit outright, and now! "Open your mouth wide." "Will I have it if I asked for it?" It is written, "He that asks receives; he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened." If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall have this unspeakably great blessing of being immediately saved, for, "He that believes on the Son of God has everlasting life." "Open your mouth wide." "But I am such a sinner." Open your mouth, man! The promise makes no limit as to who you are. "But I am—I am—." There, I mind not what you are. Open your mouth, man! Open your mouth wide! If we were to gather together in one place all the little waifs and strays of London streets, and were to say to them, "Children, we are going to give you a good dinner, and all you have to do is open your mouths," I do not suppose one little hungry wretch would shut his mouth, or turn away muttering, "I am not fit." Oh dear, no! You can be quite sure that they would open their mouths if all were hungry, and would need no pressing either! And so will you, too, if the Spirit of God has made you hunger and thirst after righteousness. Open your mouth wide, believing that Jesus is the Christ! Trust your soul with Him and ask, now, for immediate pardon through His precious blood and you will not be denied. May the Holy Spirit make you hungry and then your longing mouth shall be filled—and God shall have all the glory.

May His blessing rest upon you for Christ's sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 81.

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THE OVERFLOWING CUP
NO. 1222

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

"My cup runs over."
Psalm 23:5.

THE psalm culminates in this expression. The poet can mount no higher. He has endeavored to express the blessedness of his condition, in having the Lord for his Shepherd, but after all his efforts, he is conscious of failure. His sonnet has not reached the height of the great argument, nor has his soul, though enlarged with gratitude, been able to compass the immeasurable gifts of grace. And therefore, in holy wonder at the lavish superfluities of mercy, he cries, "My cup runs over." In one short, but most expressive, sentence he does as good as say, "Not only have I enough, but more than enough! I possess not only all that I am capable of containing, but I inherit an excess of joy, a redundancy of blessing, an extravagance of favor, a prodigality of love—my cup runs over."

We do not know when David wrote this psalm. There seems, however, to be no period of his life in which he could have used this expression in reference purely to his temporal circumstances. In his youth, he was a shepherd boy and kept his father's flock. And in such an occupation, there were many hardships and discomforts, in addition to which he appears to have been the object of the ill-will of his brothers. He was not rocked on the knee of luxury, nor pampered with indulgences. His was a hardy life abroad and a trying course at home. And unless he had been deeply spiritual, and therefore, found contentment in his God, he could not have said, "My cup runs over." When he had come forth into public life and lived in the courts of Saul, and even had become the king's son-in-law, his position was far too perilous to afford him joy. The king hated him and sought his life many times. If it were not that he spoke of grace and not of outward circumstances, he could not have, then, said, "My cup runs over." During the period of his exile, his haunts were in the dens and caves of the mountains and the lone places of the wilderness, to which he fled for his life like a hunted partridge. He had no rest for the soles of his feet—his thirst after the ordinances of God's house was intense and his companions were not such as to afford him solace—surely it could only have been in reference to *spiritual* things that he could, then, have said, "My cup runs over." When he came to be king over Israel, his circumstances, though far superior to any which he may have expected to reach, were very troublous ones for a long season. The house of Saul warred against him and then, the Philistines took up arms. He

passed from war to war and marched from conflict to conflict. A king's position is, in itself, a thorny place, but this king had been a man of war from his youth up, so that, apart from the grace of God and the choice blessings of the covenant, he could not even, on the throne, have been able to say, "My cup runs over."

In his later days, after his great sin with Bathsheba, his troubles were incessant and such as must have well near broken the old man's heart. You remember the cry, "O Absalom, my son, my son! Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son"? That was the close of a long trial from his graceless favorite—a trial which had been preceded by many others—in which first one member of his family and then another departed from the paths of right. Nor did it close the chapter of his adversities, for the troubles of his heart were enlarged even to the last, and the good old man had to say upon his deathbed that, though he rejoiced in the sure covenant of God, yet his house was not so with God as his heart could have desired. We cannot, therefore, take the text and say, "This is the exclamation of a man in easy circumstances who was never tried. We cannot say this was the song of a favorite of providence who never knew an ungratified wish." Not so. David was a man of troubles. He bore the yoke in his youth and was chastened in all his old age. You have before you, not a King Croesus, whose long prosperity became, itself, a terror, nor an Alexander whose boundless conquests only excited new ambitions, nor even a Solomon whose reign was unbroken peace and commercial gain, but *David*, the man who cried, "Deep calls unto deep at the noise of the waterspouts; all Your waves and Your billows have gone over me." So did the spiritual outweigh the natural, that the consolations of the son of Jesse exceeded his tribulation, and even in his most troublous times, there were bright seasons of fellowship with the Lord, in which he joyfully said, "My cup runs over."

Let us think of *some cups which never run over*. And then consider, *if ours runs over, why it does so.* And then, thirdly, *what then*?

I. SOME MEN'S CUPS NEVER RUN OVER. Many even fail to be filled because *taken to the wrong sourc*e. Such are the cups which are held beneath the drippings of the world's leaky cistern. Men try to find full satisfaction in wealth, but they never do. Pactolus fills no man's cup, that power belongs exclusively to the river whose streams make glad the city of God. As to money, every man will have enough when he has a little more, but contentment with his gains comes to no man. Wealth is not true riches, neither are men's hearts the fuller because their purses are heavy. Men have thought to fill their cups out of the foul pools of what they call, "pleasure," but all in vain, for appetite grows, passion becomes voracious, and lust, like a horseleech, cries, "Give, give." Like the jaws of death and the mouth of the sepulcher, the depraved heart can never be satisfied. At the polluted pool of pleasure no cup was ever filled though thousands have been broken—it is a corrosive liquor which eats into the pitcher and devours the vessel into which it flows. Some have tried to fill

their souls with fame. They have aspired to be great among their fellow men and to wear honorable titles earned in war, or gained in study. But satisfaction is not created by the highest renown. You shall turn to the biographies of the great and perceive that, in their secret hearts, they never gained contentment from the most grand successes they achieved. Perhaps if you had to look at the truly miserable, you would do better to go to the Houses of Parliament and to the palaces of those who govern nations, than to the outskirts of poverty, for awful misery is full often clothed in scarlet, and agony feasts at the table of kings. From the sparkling founts of fame, no cups are filled. Young man, you are just starting in life. You have the cup in your hand and you want to fill it. Let us warn you (those of us who have tried the world) that it cannot fill your soul, not even with such poor sickly liquor as it offers you. It will pretend to fill, but fill it never can! There is a craving of the soul which can never be satisfied, except by its Creator. In God, only, is the fullness of the heart, which He has made for Himself.

Some cups are never filled for the excellent reason that *the bearers of them suffer from the grievous disease of natural discontent*. All unconverted men are not equally discontented, but some are intensely so. You can no more fill the heart of a discontented man than you can fill a cup which has the bottom knocked out. A contented man may have enough, but a discontented man never can—his heart is like the Slough of Despond into which thousands of wagon loads of the best material were cast—and yet the slough swallowed up all and was none the better. Discontent is a bottomless bog into which, if one world were cast, it would quiver and heave for another. A discontented man dooms himself to the direst form of poverty. Yes, he makes himself so great a pauper that the revenues of empires could not enrich him. Are you the victims of discontent? Young men, do you feel that you never can be content while you are apprentices? Are you impatient in your present position? Believe me, as George Herbert said of incomes in times gone by, "He that cannot live on 20 pounds a year cannot live on forty." So may I say—he who is not content in his present position will not be content in another, though it brought him double possessions. If you were to accumulate property, young man, until you became enormously rich, yet with that same hungry heart in your bosom, you would still pine for more. When the vulture of dissatisfaction has once fixed its talons in the breast, it will not cease to tear at your insides. Perhaps you are no longer under tutors and governors, but have launched into life on your own account, and yet you are displeased with providence. You dreamed that if you were married, and had your little ones about you, and a house all your own, then you would be satisfied. And it has all come to pass, but scarcely anything contents you. The meal provided today was not good enough for you. The bed you will lie upon tonight will not be soft enough for you. The weather is too hot or too cold, too dry or too damp. You scarcely ever meet with one of your fellow men who is quite to your mind—he is too sharp and rough-

tempered, or else he is too easy and has "no spirit." Your type of a good man you never see—the great men are all dead and the true men from this generation fail. Some of you cannot be *made* happy—you are never right till everything is wrong—nor bearable until you have had your morning's growl. There is no pleasing you. I know men, who, if they were in Paradise would find fault with the glades of Eden and would propose to turn the channels of its rivers and shift the position of its trees! If the serpent were excluded, they would demand liberty for him to enter and would grow indignant at his exclusion. They would criticize the music of the angels, find fault with the cherubim, and become weary of white robes and harps of gold—or as a last resource, they would become angry with a place so completely blessed as not to afford them a corner for the indulgence of their spiteful censures. For such unrestful minds, the cup which runs over is not prepared.

Some, too, we know, whose cup never will run over because *they are envious*. They would be very well satisfied with what they have, but someone else has more, and they cannot bear it. If they see another in a better position in society, they long to bring him down to their level. Now, surely, friend, if you find your own lot hard to bear, you cannot wish another man to suffer it, too! If your case is a hard one, you should be glad that others are not equally afflicted. It is a happy thing when a man gets rid of envy, for then he rejoices in the joy of others and with a secret appropriation, which is far removed from anything like theft, he calls everything that belongs to other men his own, for he is rich in their riches, glad in their gladness, and above all, happy that they are saved. Some of us have known what it is to doubt our own salvation and yet feel that we must always love Jesus Christ for saving other people. I charge you, cast out envy! The green dragon is a very dangerous guest in any man's home. Remember, it may lurk in the hearts of very good men. A preacher may not be able to appreciate the gifts of another preacher, because they seem to be more attractive than his own. Good people, when they see another useful, are too much in the habit of saying, "Yes, but he does not do *this,"* or, "She does not do *that,"* and the remark is made, "He is very useful, but very eccentric," as if there ever was a man who did anything in this world that was not eccentric. Their very eccentricities, (which are uncomfortable things), God often overrules to be the power of the men and women whom He means to employ in striking out new paths of usefulness. What you call imprudence, may be *faith,* and what you condemn as obstinacy, may only be strength of mind necessary for persevering under difficulties. Bless God for gracious men as you find them, and do not want them to be other than they are. When divine grace has renewed them, help them all you can and make the best use you can of them. And if their bell does not ring out the same note as yours and you cannot change its tone, and yet you feel that your note would be discordant to theirs, pray God to tune your bell to harmony with theirs, that from the sacred steeple, there may ring out a holy, hallowed, harmonious chime

through the union of all the bells and all their tones in the sole praise of God. Envy prevents many cups from running over.

So, once more, in the best of men *unbelief is sure to prevent the cup running over*. You cannot get into the condition of the psalmist while you doubt your God! Note well how he puts it. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." He has no fears, or forebodings, or doubts. He has given a writing of divorce between his soul and anxiety. And now he says, "My cup runs over." What are you fretting about, my sister? What is the last new subject for worry? If you have fretted all your life, your husband, your children, and your servants have had a sad time of it. Your husband feels, with regard to you, "Good woman, I know nothing in which I could find fault with her, except that she finds fault with others and that she grieves when there is no cause for grieving." May the Lord be pleased to string your harp so that it may not give forth such jarring notes as it now does, but may yield the joyful music of praise. Your great need is a more childlike faith in God! Take God's Word and trust it and good sister, *your* cup will run over, too. What is *your* trouble, brother? You were smiling just now at the thought of how some women are troubled, for you thought, "Ah, they do not have the cares men have in business!" Little do you know! There is a burden for women to carry which is as heavy as that of their husbands and brothers. But what is your distress? Is it one that you *dare* not tell to God? Then, what business have you with it? Is it one which you *cannot* tell to God? What is there in your heart that forbids your unburdening it? Is it one which you *refuse* to tell to God? Then, it will be a trouble and a curse to you—and it will grow heavier and heavier till it will crush you to the earth. But, O, come and tell your great Helper! You believe in God for your sons—believe in Him about your property! Believe in God about your sick wife or your dying child! Believe in God about your losses and bad debts and declining business! A bare bosom before the Lord is necessary to perfect satisfaction. I have proven God and I speak what I know—I have had a care that has troubled me, which I could scarcely communicate to another without, perhaps, making it worse. I have done my best and I have prayed over it, but have not seen a way of escape and at last, I have left it with God, feeling that if He did not solve it, it must go unsolved. I have resolved that I would have nothing more to do with it and when I have done that, the difficulty has disappeared—and in its disappearance, I have found an additional reason for confidence in God—and have been able, again, to say, "My cup runs over."

We must walk by faith with both feet. Some try to walk by faith with the left foot, but their right foot they will not lift from the earth—and therefore, they make no progress at all. Wholly by faith, wholly by faith must we live! He who learns to do that will soon say, "My cup runs over."

I have not time to enlarge, although much more might be said, for there are cups which never have run over, and never will.

II. But now, secondly, WHY DOES OUR CUP RUN OVER? Assuming that we have really believed in Jesus and that not with a wavering faith, but in downright solemn earnest, then joy will follow our faith. Our cup runs over, first, because, having Christ, *we have in Him all things*. "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?"—

"This world is ours, and worlds to come:
Earth is our lodge, and heaven our home."

Between here and heaven, there is nothing we shall need but what God has supplied. The promise is, "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." As the old Puritan puts it, earthly comforts are like paper and string which you need not go to buy, for you will have them given to you when you purchase more valuable things. Seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Our God is not like the Duke of Alva, who promised to spare the lives of certain Protestants, and then denied them food so that they died of starvation. He does not give us eternal life and then deny us that which is necessary to the securing of it! He will give us manna all the way from Goshen to Canaan, and cause the gushing Rock to follow us all the time we are in the wilderness. "No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly." "Your shoes shall be iron and brass and as your days so shall your strength be." I climbed a hill the other day, and as I went down the steep side, a sharp stone made a tremendous gash in my shoe, and then I thought of that promise, "Your shoes shall be iron and brass." If the road is rough, a strong shoe shall fit the foot for it. As with the Israelites, their feet did not swell, neither did their garments wax old upon them, so shall it be with you. You shall find all things in God and God in all things.

But there is another reason why our cups run over. They run over *because the infinite God, Himself, is our*s. "The Lord is my shepherd." "My God," the psalmist styles Him. One of the most delightful renderings ever employed in a metrical translation of the psalms is that of the old Scotch version—

"For yet I know I shall Him praise,
Who graciously to me
The health is of my countenance;
Yes, my own God is He."

I feel as if I could stop preaching and fall to repeating the words, "My own God," "My own God," for the Lord is as much my God as if there were no one else in the world to claim Him! Stand back, you angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, and all you hosts redeemed by blood! Whatever may be your rights and privileges, you cannot lessen my inheritance! Assuredly, all of God is mine—all His fullness, all His attributes, all His love, all Himself, all, all is mine, for He has said, "I am your God." What a portion is this! What mind can compass it? O, believer, see here your boundless treasure! Will not your cup run over, now? What cup can hold your God? If your soul were enlarged and made as wide as heaven,

you could not hold your God! And if you grew and grew and grew till your being were as vast as seven heavens and the whole universe, itself, were dwarfed in comparison with your capacity, yet, *still,* you could not contain Him who is infinite! Truly, when you know, by faith, that Father, Son, and Spirit are all your own in covenant, your cup must run over!

But when do we feel this? When do we see that our cup runs over? I think it is, first, *when we receive a great deal more than we ever prayed for*. Has not that been your happy case? Mercy has come to your house and you have said, "Why have I received this? I never dared to seek so great a blessing." "He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or even think." You knelt down and prayed God to deliver you in trouble—He has done it, but instead of just barely carrying you through, He has set your feet in a large room and you have said, "Is this the manner of man, O Lord God? Had you delivered me by the skin of my teeth, I had been grateful, but now my cup runs over." You asked the Lord to give you sufficient sustenance for the day and look, He has bestowed upon you a great many worldly comforts and His blessing with them all. Must you not say, "My cup runs over"? You asked Him to save your eldest daughter, but in His infinite mercy, He has been pleased to convert several of your children, perhaps all. You began to teach in the Sunday school and you prayed to the Lord to give you one soul. Why, He has given you a dozen! Will you not say, "My cup runs over"? When I began to preach, I was sure my little meeting house seemed large enough and my sphere sufficiently extensive. And if the Lord had said to me, "I will give you a thousand souls as your reward before you shall go to heaven," I should have been overjoyed and cried my eyes out with weeping for delight. But now, how many thousands has He given me to be the seals of my ministry? My cup runs over! My God has dealt with me beyond all my expectations or desires! It is His way! He gives like a king! He has outstripped my poor prayers and left my faith far in the rear. I am persuaded, beloved, that many of you know many things concerning God which you never asked to know. You possess covenant blessings which you never sought and you are in the enjoyment of attainments which you did not think it possible for you to gain—so that the cup of your prayer has been filled to the brim and it runs over! Glory be to the all-bounteous Lord!

So has it been with *the cup of our expectation*, for we ask many things and then, from lack of expecting them, we fail to receive them. But have you not indulged large expectations, some of you? Have you not had your day-dreams in which you pictured to yourself what a Christian might do? And the Lord has given you more than imagination pictured! You sat at mercy's gate and said, "Would God I might but enter to sit among the hired servants." But He has made you sit at the table and killed for you the fatted calf! You were shivering in your rags, and you said, "Would God I might be washed from this filthiness and my nakedness clothed a little!" But He has brought forth the best robe and put it on you! You

said, "Oh, that I had a little joy and peace!" But, lo, He has made music and dancing for you, and your spirit rejoices abundantly in the God of your salvation! I will ask any Christian here if Christ is not a good Christ? You know when Henry the Eighth married Anne of Cleves, Holbein was sent to paint her picture, with which the king was charmed. But when he saw the finished work, his judgement was very different, and he expressed disgust instead of affection. The painter had deceived him. Now, no such flatteries can ever be paid to our Lord Jesus Christ. The painters, I mean the preachers, *all* fall short—they have no faculty with which to set forth beauties so inexpressibly charming, so beyond all conception of mind and heart! The best things which have ever been sung by adoring poets, written by devout authors, or poured forth by seraphic preachers, all fall below the surpassing excellence of our Redeemer! His living labors and His dying love have a value all their own! There are great surprises yet in store for those who know the Savior best. Jesus has filled the cup of our expectation till it runs over. And I may say the same of every mercy that He has brought in His hands—it has been a richer mercy, a rarer mercy, a more loving mercy, a more rapturous mercy, a fuller mercy, a more lasting mercy than ever we thought it possible for us to receive!

I speak to some who live by faith in their Lord's service. You have learned to expect great things, my brethren, and you will learn to expect greater things, still! But has not God always kept pace with our expectation? Has He not outrun us? Has He not presented us with His kindness? The path of a man who lives by faith is like a gigantic staircase—it winds up, up, up, in God's sight, into the clear crystal—but as far as we are concerned it seems to wind its way among dense clouds, full often dark as night. Every step we take, we stand firmly on a slab of adamant, but we cannot see the next landing place for our foot! It looks as if we were about to plunge into an awful gulf, but we venture on and the next step is firm beneath our feet. We have ascended higher and higher—and yet the mysterious staircase still pierces the clouds—though we cannot see a step of the way. We have found our Jacob's ladder until this time to be firm as the everlasting hills! And so we climb on and we mean to do so, with the finger of God as our guide, His smile as our light, and His power as our support. The blessed voice is calling us and our feet are borne upward by the summons, climbing on and on in the firm belief that, when our flesh shall fail, our soul shall find herself standing on the threshold of the New Jerusalem! Go on, beloved! God will do far more than you expect Him to do, and you shall sing, "My cup runs over."

Sometimes, too, the text is true of the Christian's *joy*, "My cup runs over." The other night, as I sat among our young men in the ministry, and we were all singing, "I am so glad that Jesus loves me," I did not wonder that the writer of that piece made them repeat that delightful truth over and over again. "I am so glad that Jesus loves me." You can excuse monotonies, repetitions and tautologies when that dear word is

ringing in the ears, "Jesus loves me," "Jesus loves me," "Jesus loves me." Ring that bell again and yet again! What need of change when you have reached a perfect joy? Why ask variety when you cannot conceive of anything more sweet? There is music, both in the sound and the sense, and there is enough of weight, force, and power in the simple utterance of, "Jesus loves me," to allow of its being repeated hundreds of times and yet never palling upon the ear! Now and then, I hear of an interruption of a sermon by a person who has found the Savior—how I wish we were often interrupted in that way! I wonder, when men first learn that Jesus suffered in their place, that they do not shout and make the walls ring! Surely it is enough to make them! What a blessing it would be if that old Methodist fire, which flamed so furiously in men's souls that they were forced to let the sparks fly up the chimney in hearty expressions, would but blaze away in our cold, formal assemblies! Come, let us pour out a libation of praise from our overflowing cups, while we say, again, "I am so glad that Jesus loves me." Have you not sat down when you have been alone and felt, "I am so happy because I am saved, forgiven, justified, a child of God! I am beloved of the Lord! This fills me with such joy that I can hardly contain myself"? Why, if anyone had come to you at such a time and said, "There is a legacy of 10,000 pounds left you," you would have snuffed at it, and felt, "What is that? I have infinitely more than that, for I am a joint heir with Christ. My Beloved is mine and I am His. 'My cup runs over.' I have too much joy. 'I am so glad that Jesus loves me.'"

At such times, *our gratitude ought to run over, too*. Our poet's gratitude ran over when he wrote that remarkable stanza—

"Through all eternity, to You
My grateful song I'll raise;
But, oh, eternity's too short
To utter half Your praise!"

I have heard cold critics condemn that verse and therein prove their incompetence to enjoy poetry! Would they cramp the language of love by the rules of grammar? May not enthusiasm be allowed a language of its own? It is true it is incorrect to speak of eternity as, "too short," but the inaccuracy is strictly accurate when love interprets it! When a cup runs over, it does not drip, drip, at so many drops per minute—it leaps down in its own disorderly fashion—and so does the grateful heart! Its utterances are as bold as it can make them, but they never satisfy itself. It labors to express itself in words and sometimes it succeeds for a while, and cries, "My heart is composing a good matter, I speak of the things which I have made touching," but before long, its rushing overflow stops up the channel of its utterance and silence becomes both necessary and refreshing. Our souls are sometimes cast into a swoon of happiness in which we rather live and breathe gratitude than feel any power to set it forth. As the lily and the rose praise God by pouring forth their lives in perfume, so do we feel an almost involuntary outgush of our very selves in love

which could, by no artistic means, tell forth itself. We are filled and overfilled, saturated, satiated with the divine sweetnesses—

"Your fullness, Lord, is mine, for oh,
That fullness is a fount as free
As it is inexhaustible,
Jehovah's boundless gift to me.
My Christ! O sing it in the heavens!
Let every angel lift his voice;
Sound with ten thousand harps his praise,
With me, you heavenly hosts, rejoice!"

III. Now, thirdly, WHAT THEN? The first thing is, *let us adore Him who has filled the cup*. If the cup runs over, let it run over upon the altar. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" Remember, dear Christian friends, that preaching is not a *result*—it is a *means* to an end—and that end is the worship of God. The design of our solemn assemblies is adoration. That, also, is the aim and result of salvation—that the saved ones may fall down on their faces and worship the Lamb in His glory. Preaching and praying are like the stalks of the wheat, but hearty worship is the ear itself. If God has filled your cup, worship Him in the solemn silence of your soul. Let every power, passion, thought, emotion, ability, and capacity adore the Lord in lowest reverence for the fountain from which flow the streams which have filled us to the brim.

The next thing is, if your cup runs over, *pray the Lord to make it larger*. Does not the apostle say, "Be you also enlarged"? Does not David speak of having his heart enlarged? There is too much of narrowness in the largest-hearted man! We are all but shallow vessels towards God. If we believed more and trusted more, we should have more, for the stint is not with God. Pray like Jabez of old, "Oh, that You would bless me, indeed, and enlarge my coast."

The next thing is, if your cup is running over, *let it stop where it is*. Understand my meaning—the cup stands under the spring and the spring keeps running into it and so the cup runs over. But it will not run over long if you take it from where the spring pours into it. The grateful heart runs over because the fountain of grace runs over. Keep your cup where it is! It is our unwisdom that we forsake the fountain of living waters and apply to the world's broken cisterns. We say in the old proverb, "Let well enough alone," but we forget this practical maxim with regard to the highest good. If your cup runs over, hear Christ say, "Abide in Me." David had a mind to keep his cup where it was and he said, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." When I preach away from here, I always like to go to the same house in the town, and I say to my host, "I shall always come to you, as long as you invite me, for I do not think there is a better house." If a man has a good friend, it is a pity to change him. The older the friend, the better! The bird which has a good nest had better keep to it. Gad not abroad, I charge you, but let the Lord be your dwelling place forever. Many have been fascinated by new notions and new

doctrines and every now and then, somebody tells us he has found a wonderful diamond of new truth, but which generally turns out to be a piece of an old bottle. As for me, I need nothing new, for the old is better and my heart cries, "Return unto your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you." Until they find me a better fountain than the Lord has opened in Christ Jesus, His Son, my soul will abide in her old place and plunge her pitcher into the living waters! Where my cup is filled, there shall it stand and run over, still.

Once more, does your cup run over? *Then call in your friends to get the overflow*. Let others participate in that which you do not wish to monopolize or intercept. Christian people ought to be like the cascades I have seen in brooks and rivers, always running over and so causing other falls which, again, by their joyful excess cause fresh cascades and beauty is joyfully multiplied! Are not those fountains fair to look upon where the overflow of an upper basin causes the next to fall in a silver shower, and that, again, produces another glassy sheet of water? If God fills one of us, it is that we may bless others! If He gives His ministering servants sweet fellowship with Him, it is that their words may encourage others to seek the same fellowship. And if their hearers get a portion of meat, it is that they may carry a portion home. If you get the water for your own mill and dam it up, you will find that it will become overgrown with rank weeds and becomes a foul thing. Pull up the sluices, man, and let it run! There is nothing in the world better than circulation, either for grace, or for money! Let it run! There is more a-coming, there is more a-coming! To withhold will impoverish you, to scatter is to increase! If you get the joy of God in your heart, go and tell it to poor weeping Mary and doubting Thomas—it may be that God sent you the running over on purpose that those who were ready to perish might be refreshed.

Last of all, does your cup run over? Then *think of the fullness which resides in Him from whom it all proceed*s. Does your cup run over? Then think of the happiness that is in store for you when it will *always* run over in everlasting glory! Do you love the sunlight? Does it warm and cheer you? What must it be to live in the sun, like the angel Uriel that Milton speaks of! Do you prize the love of Christ? Is it sweet to you? What will it be to bask in its unclouded light? O, that He would draw up the blinds that we might catch a glimpse of that face of His which is as the sun shining in his strength! What will it be to see His face and to enjoy the kisses of His mouth forever? The dew which distils from His hands makes the wilderness rejoice! What must it be to drink of the rivers of His pleasure? A crumb from His table has often made a banquet for His poor saints, but what will it be when the Tree of Life will yield them 12 manner of fruits and they shall hunger no more? Bright days ought to remind our souls of heaven, only let us remember that the brightest days below are not like the days of heaven any more than a day in a coal mine, when the lamp burns most brightly, can be compared to a summer's noon! Still, still, we are down below. The brightest joys of earth are

only moonlight. We shall get higher before long, into the unclouded skies, into the land of which we read, "There is no night there." How soon we shall be there, none of us can tell! The angel beckons some of us. We hear the bells of heaven ringing in our ears even now. Very soon—so very soon—we cannot tell how very soon, we shall be with Jesus where He is, and shall behold His glory! Brethren, the thought of such amazing bliss makes our cups run over! And our happiness overflows as we remember that it will be forever and forever and forever! Eyes never to weep again, hands never to be soiled again, bones never to ache again, feet never to limp again, hearts never to be heavy again—the whole man as full as it can be of ineffable delight, plunged into a sea of bliss, deluged with ecstatic joy—as full of heaven as heaven is full of Christ!

Dear hearer, the last word I have to say is this, do you know what it is to be filled with the love of God? Unconverted hearer, I know you are not happy. You say, "I wish my cup would run over!" What are you doing with it? "I am trying to empty it of my old sins." That will not make it run over. "I have been washing it with my tears." That will not make it run over. Do you know the only way of having joy and peace in your heart? What would you do with an empty cup if you were thirsty? Would you not hold it under a fountain until it were full? This is what you must do with your poor, dry, empty soul! Come and receive of Jesus, grace for grace. "For as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on His name." Hold your empty cup under the stream of divine fullness which flows to the guilty through Jesus Christ and you shall also joyfully say, "My cup runs over."

The Lord pour His mercy into you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 23.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—725, 708, 711.

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JESUS, THE SUBSTITUTE FOR HIS PEOPLE
NO. 1223

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

"Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."
Romans 8:34.

THE most dreadful alarm that can disturb a reasonable man is the fear of being condemned by the Judge of all. To be condemned of God, how dreadful! To be condemned of Him at the last great day, how terrible! Well might Belshazzar's loins be loosed when the handwriting on the wall condemned him as weighed in the balances and found wanting! And well may the conscience of the convicted one be comparable to a little hell when, at its lesser judgement seat, the law pronounces sentence upon him on account of his past life. I know of no greater distress than that caused by the suspicion of condemnation in the believer's mind. We are not afraid of tribulation, but we dread condemnation. We are not ashamed when wrongly condemned of men, but the bare idea of being condemned of God makes us, like Moses, "exceeding fear and quake." The bare possibility of being found guilty at the great judgement seat of God is so alarming to us that we cannot rest until we see it removed. When Paul offered a loving and grateful prayer for Oneisphorus, he could ask no more for him than, "The Lord grant that he may find mercy in that day." Yet though condemnation is the most fatal of all ills, the apostle Paul, in the holy ardor of his faith dares ask, "Who is he that condemns?" He challenges earth and hell and heaven! In the justifiable venturesomeness of his confidence in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, he looks up to the excellent glory and to the throne of the thrice holy God, and even in His presence, before whom the heavens are not pure, and who charged His angels with folly, he dares to say, "Who is he that condemns?"

By what method was Paul, who had a tender and awakened conscience, so completely delivered from all fear of condemnation? It certainly was not by any of the enormity of sin. Among all the writers who have ever spoken of the evil of sin, none have inveighed against it more heartily, or mourned it more sincerely from their very soul, than the apostle Paul. He declares it to be exceedingly sinful. You never find him suggesting apologies or extenuations. He neither mitigates sin nor its conse-

quences. He is very plain when he speaks of the wages of sin and of what will follow as the consequences of iniquity. He sought not that false peace which comes from regarding transgression as a trifle. In fact, he was a great destroyer of such refuges of lies. Rest assured, dear hearer, that you will never attain to a well-grounded freedom from the fear of condemnation by trying to make your sins appear *little*. That is not the way—it is far better to feel the weight of sin till it oppresses your soul than to be rid of the burden by presumption and hardness of heart. Your sins are damnable and must condemn you unless they are purged away by the great sin-offering!

Neither did the apostle quiet his fears by confidence in anything that he had himself felt or done. Read the passage through and you will find no allusion to himself. If he is sure that none can condemn him, it is not because he has prayed, nor because he has repented, nor because he has been the apostle of the Gentiles, nor because he has suffered many stripes and endured much for Christ's sake. He gives no hint of having derived peace from *any* of these things—but in the humble spirit of a true believer in Jesus, he builds his hope of safety upon the work of his Savior! His reasons for rejoicing in noncondemnation all lie in the death, resurrection, power, and the plea of his blessed Substitute! He looks right out of himself, for there he could see a thousand reasons for condemnation, to Jesus through whom condemnation is rendered impossible. And then, in exulting confidence he lifts up the challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" He dares to demand of men and angels and devils, yes, of the great Judge, Himself, "Who is he that condemns?"

Now, since it is not an uncommon thing for Christians in a weakly state of mind, exercised with doubts and harassed with cares, to feel the cold shadow of condemnation chilling their spirits, I would speak to such, hoping that the good Spirit may comfort their hearts.

Dear child of God, you must not live under fear of condemnation, for "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," and God would not have you fear that which can never come to you. If you are not a Christian, delay not till you have escaped from condemnation by laying hold on Christ Jesus. But if you have, indeed, believed in the Lord Jesus, you are not under condemnation and you never can be—either in this life or in that which is to come! Let me help you by refreshing your memory with those precious truths of God, concerning Christ, which show that believers are clear before the Lord. May the Holy Spirit apply them to your souls and give you rest.

I. And first, you, as a believer, cannot be condemned because CHRIST HAS DIED. *The believer has Christ for his Substitute* and upon that Substitute his sin has been laid. The Lord Jesus was made sin for His peo-

ple. "The Lord has made to meet upon Him the iniquity of us all." "He bore the sin of many." Now, our Lord Jesus Christ, by His death has suffered the penalty of our sin, and made recompense to divine justice. Observe, then, the comfort which this brings to us. If the Lord Jesus has been condemned for us, how can *we* be condemned? While justice survives in heaven and mercy reigns on earth, it is not possible that a soul condemned in Christ should also be condemned in itself! If the punishment has been meted out to its Substitute, it is neither consistent with mercy nor justice that the penalty should, a second time, be executed. The death of Christ is an all-sufficient ground of confidence for every man that believes in Jesus. He may know of a surety that his sin is put away and his iniquity is covered. Fix your eyes on the fact that you have a Substitute who has borne divine wrath on your account, and you will know no fear of condemnation—

"Jehovah lifted up His rod—
O CHRIST, it fell on Thee!
You were sore stricken of Your God;
There's not one stroke for me."

Observe, dear brethren, *who it was that died*, for this will help you. Christ Jesus, *the Son of God,* died! The just for the unjust! He who was your Savior was no mere man. Those who deny the Godhead of Christ are consistent in rejecting the atonement. It is not possible to hold a proper substitutionary propitiation for sin unless you hold that Christ was God. If one man might suffer for another, yet one man's sufferings could not avail for ten thousand times ten thousand men. What efficacy could there be in the death of one innocent person to put away the transgressions of a multitude? No, but because He who carried our sins up to the tree was God over all, blessed forever—because He who suffered His feet to be fastened to the wood was none other than that same Word, who was in the beginning with God, and who also was God—because He who bowed His head to death was none other than the Christ, who is immortality and life, His dying had efficacy in it to take away the sins of all for whom He died! As I think of my Redeemer, and remember that He is God, Himself, I feel that if He took my nature and died, then, indeed, my sin is gone. I can rest on that. I am sure that if He, who is infinite and omnipotent, offered a satisfaction for my sins, I need not inquire as to the sufficiency of the atonement, for who dares to suggest a limit to its power? What Jesus did and suffered must be equal to any emergency. Were my sins even greater than they are, His blood could make them whiter than snow. If God incarnate died in my place, my iniquities are cleansed.

Again, remember who it was that died, and take another view of Him. It was *Christ,* which being interpreted, means, *"The Anointed."* He who

came to save us did not come unsent or uncommissioned. He came by His Father's will, saying, "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O God." He came by the Father's power, "For Him has God set forth to be a propitiation for our sins." He came with the Father's anointing, saying, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me." He was the Messiah, sent of God. The Christian need have no fear of condemnation when he realizes Christ died for him, because God Himself appointed Christ to die, and if God arranged the plan of substitution, and appointed the Substitute, no one can repudiate the vicarious work. Even if we could not speak as we have done of the glorious person of our Lord, yet if the divine sovereignty and wisdom elected such a One as Christ to bear our sins, we may be well satisfied to take God's choice and rest content with that which contents the Lord.

Again, believer, sin cannot condemn you because Christ *died*. His sufferings, I doubt not, were vicarious long before He came to the cross, but still, the substance of the penalty due to sin was *death*, and it was when Jesus *died* that He finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. The law could go no further than its own capital sentence, which is death—this was the dire punishment pronounced in the garden—"In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." Christ died *physically,* with all the concomitants of disgrace and pain, and His inner death, which was the bitterest part of the sentence, was attended by the loss of His Father's countenance and an unutterable horror. He descended into the grave, and for three days and three nights, He slept within the tomb really *dead*. Herein is our joy—our Lord has suffered the extreme penalty and given blood for blood, and life for life. He has paid all that was due, for He has paid His life. He has given Himself for us and borne our sins in His own body on the tree, so that His death is the death of our sins. "It is Christ that died."

I speak not upon these things with any flourishes of words. I give you but the bare doctrine. May the Spirit of God apply these truths to your souls and you will see that no condemnation can come on those who are in Christ!

It is quite certain, beloved that the death of Christ must have been effectual for the removal of those sins which were laid upon Him. It is not conceivable that Christ died in vain—I mean not conceivable without blasphemy—and I hope we could not descend to that! He was appointed of God to bear the sins of many and though He was God, Himself, yet He came into the world and took upon Himself the form of a servant and bore those sins, not merely in sorrow, but in death itself. And it is not possible that He should be defeated or disappointed of His purpose. Not in one jot or tittle will the intent of Christ's death be frustrated! Jesus shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. That which He meant

to do by dying shall be done and He did not pour His blood upon the ground in waste in any measure or sense. Then, if Jesus died for you, there stands this sure argument—that as *He* did not die in vain, *you* shall not perish. He has suffered and you shall *not* suffer. He has been condemned and you shall *not* be condemned. He has died for you and now, He gives you the promise—"Because I live, you shall live also."

II. The apostle goes on to a second argument, which he strengthens with the word, "rather." "It is Christ that died, yes, *rather*, THAT IS RISEN AGAIN." I do not think we give sufficient weight to this, "rather." The death of Christ is the rocky basis of all comfort, but we must not overlook the fact that the resurrection of Christ is considered by the apostle to yield richer comfort than His death—"Yes, rather, that is risen again." How can we derive more comfort from Christ's resurrection than from His death, if from His death we gain a sufficient ground of consolation? I answer, because *our Lord's resurrection denoted His total clearance from all the sin which was laid upon Him*. A woman is overwhelmed with debt. How shall she be discharged from her liabilities? A friend, out of his great love to her, marries her. No sooner is the marriage ceremony performed than she is, by that very act, clear of debt because her debts are her husband's, and in taking her, he takes all her obligations. She may gather comfort from that thought, but she is much more at ease when her beloved goes to her creditors, pays all, and brings her the receipts. First, she is comforted by the marriage, which legally relieves her from the liability—but much more is she at rest when her husband, himself, is rid of all the liability which he assumed. Our Lord Jesus took our debts—in death, He paid them and—in resurrection, He blotted out the record. By His resurrection, He took away the last vestige of charge against us, for the resurrection of Christ was the Father's declaration that He was satisfied with the Son's atonement. As our hymnster puts it—

"The Lord is risen, indeed,
Then justice asks no more.
Mercy and truth are now agreed
Which stood opposed before."

In His prison of the grave, the hostage and Surety of our souls would have been confined to this very hour, unless the satisfaction which He offered had been satisfactory to God. But being fully accepted He was set free from bonds and all His people are thereby justified. "Who is he that condemns? Christ is risen again."

Mark further that *the resurrection of Christ indicated our acceptance with God*. When God raised Him from the dead, He thereby gave testimony that He had accepted Christ's work, but the acceptance of our representative is the acceptance of ourselves. When the French ambassador was sent away from the Court of Prussia, it meant that war was declared

and when the ambassador was again received, peace was re-established. When Jesus was so accepted of God that He rose again from the dead, everyone of us, who believes in Him, was accepted of God, too, for what was done to Jesus was, in effect, done to all the members of His mystical body. With Him, we are crucified. With Him, we are buried. With Him, we rise again, and in His acceptance, we are accepted.

Did not His resurrection also indicate that *He had gone right through with the entire penalty* and that His death was sufficient? Suppose for a moment that 1,800 and more years had passed away and that He still slumbered in the tomb. In such a case, we might have been enabled to believe that God had accepted Christ's substitutionary sacrifice and would ultimately raise Him from the dead, but we would have our fears. But now, we have before our eyes a sign and token as consoling as the rainbow in the day of rain, for Jesus is risen and it is clear that the law can exact no more from Him. He lives, now, by a new life and the law has no claim against Him. He, against whom the claim was brought, has died. His present life is not that against which the law can bring a suit. So with us—the law had claims on us once, but we are new creatures in Christ Jesus, we have participated in the resurrection life of Christ, and the law cannot demand penalties from our new life. The incorruptible seed within us has not sinned, for it is born of God. The law cannot condemn us, for we have died to it in Christ and are beyond its jurisdiction.

I leave with you this blessed consolation! Your Surety has discharged the debt for you, and being justified in the Spirit, has gone forth from the tomb. Lay not a burden upon yourselves by your unbelief! Do not afflict your conscience with dead works, but turn to Christ's cross and look for a revived consciousness of pardon through the blood washing.

III. I must pass on now to the third point upon which the apostle insists. "WHO IS EVEN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD." Bear in mind that what Jesus is, His people are, for they are one with Him. His condition and position are typical of their own. "Who is even at the right hand of God." That means *love,* for the right hand is for the Beloved. That means *acceptance*. Who shall sit at the right hand of God but one who is dear to God? That means *honor*. To which of the angels has He given permission to sit at His right hand? *Power* also is implied! No cherub or seraph can be said to be at the right hand of God. Christ, then, who once suffered in the flesh is, in love, acceptance, honor, and power at the right hand of God. Do you see the force, then, of the question, "Who is he that condemns?" It may be made apparent in a twofold manner. "Who can condemn me while I have such a friend at court? While my representative sits near to God, how can I be condemned?" But next, I am where He is, for it is written, "He has raised us up *together* and made us sit *together* in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Can you suppose it possible to con-

demn one who is *already* at the right hand of God? The right hand of God is a place so near, so eminent, that one cannot suppose an adversary bringing a charge against us there! Yet there the believer is in his representative! Who dare accuse him? It was laid at Haman's door as his worst crime that he sought to bring about the death of Queen Esther, herself, so dear to the king's heart. And shall my foe condemn or destroy those who are dearer to God than ever Esther was to Ahasuerus, for they sit at His right hand, vitally and indissolubly united to Jesus! Suppose you were actually at the right hand of God, would you, then, have any fear of being condemned? Do you think the bright spirits before the truth have any dread of being condemned, though they were once sinners like yourself? "No," you say, "I should have perfect confidence if I were there." And you *are* there in your representative! If you think you are not, I will ask you this question, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Is Christ divided? If you are a believer, you are one with Him and the members must be where the Head is. Till they condemn the Head, they cannot condemn the members! Is that clear? If you are at the right hand of God in Christ Jesus, who is he that condemns? Let them condemn those white-robed hosts who forever circle the throne of God and cast their crowns at His feet. Let them *attempt* that, I say, before they lay anything to the charge of the meanest believer in Christ Jesus!

IV. The last word which the apostle gives us is this, "WHO ALSO MAKES INTERCESSION FOR US." This is another reason why fear of condemnation should never cross our minds if we have, indeed, trusted our souls with Christ, for if Jesus intercedes for us, He must make a point of interceding that we may never be condemned. He would not direct His intercession to minor points and leave the major unheeded! "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me be with Me where I am," includes their being forgiven all their sins, for they could not come there if their sins were not forgiven. Rest assured that a pleading Savior makes secure the acquittal of His people.

Reflect that our Lord's intercession must be prevalent. It is not supposable that Christ asks in vain. He is no humble petitioner at a distance who, with moan and sigh, asks for what He deserves not. But with the breastplate on, sparkling with the jewels which bear His people's names, and bringing His own blood as an infinitely satisfactory atonement to the Mercy Seat of God, He pleads with unquestioned authority. If Abel's blood, crying from the ground, was heard in heaven and brought down vengeance, much more shall the blood of Christ, which speaks *within* the veil, secure the pardon and salvation of His people! The plea of Jesus is indisputable and cannot be put aside. He pleads this—"I have suffered in that man's place." Can the infinite justice of God deny that plea? "By Your will, O God, I gave Myself a Substitute for these, My people. Will

You not put away the sin of these for whom I stood?" Is not this good pleading? There is God's covenant for it. There is God's promise for it. And God's honor is involved in it so that when Jesus pleads, it is not only the dignity of His Person that has weight, and the love which God bears to His only-begotten, which is equally weighty, but His claim is overwhelming and His intercession omnipotent!

How safe is the Christian since Jesus ever lives to make intercession for him? Have I committed myself into His dear hands? Then, may I never so dishonor Him as to mistrust Him. Do I really trust Him as dying, as risen, as sitting at the Father's right hand and as pleading for me? Can I permit myself to indulge a solitary suspicion? Then, my Father, forgive this great offense and help Your servant, by a greater confidence of faith, to rejoice in Christ Jesus and say, "There is therefore now no condemnation." Go away, you that love Christ and are resting on Him, with the savor of this sweet doctrine on your hearts! But, O, you that have not trusted Christ, there is present condemnation for you! You are condemned already because you have not believed on the Son of God! And there is future condemnation for you, for the day comes, the dreadful day, when the ungodly shall be as stubble in the fire of Jehovah's wrath! The hour hastens when the Lord will lay justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet, and sweep away the refuges of lies. Come, poor soul, come and trust the crucified and you shall live! And with us you shall rejoice that none can condemn you.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 53.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—329, 404, 299.

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JESUS, THE STUMBLING STONE OF UNBELIEVERS
NO. 1224

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

"Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient."
1 Peter 2:7, 8.

SO it always is where Jesus comes—He divides the company into believers and unbelievers—the obedient and the disobedient. But why are unbelievers, here, called disobedient? Is faith a matter of law and because a man does not believe, does he therefore disobey? How can it be otherwise? Is it not a natural duty for every man to believe that which is true? Let the very least among us judge in so simple a matter! It so happens that in the very form and sound of the words in the original tongue, to believe and to obey are much the same and certainly, to disbelieve and to disobey are things of very near relationship. To disbelieve is in its very essence disobeying, for he who disbelieves the Word of the King is disloyal at heart. If I doubt the veracity of God, I have assailed His authority and if, when He sets forth His Son to be a propitiation for sin, I refuse to accept Him, disobedience is included in that rejection. As it were difficult to tell by which form of sin our father, Adam, fell, for all sins were wrapped up in the taking of the forbidden fruit, so unbelief contains within itself the eggs of all sins possible to men.

Moreover, unbelief of God's Word is the root of all other sin. A man who does not believe his God is a man who casts off the law of God. He has already rejected God's gospel—why should he respect the law? If the silken cords of love are broken asunder, how much less is the man likely to bear the bonds of law?

Now, inasmuch as it is painfully certain that a very large proportion of these who hear the gospel are unbelieving and disobedient, it becomes important to consider, What is the result of this disobedience? This disobedience leads them into violent opposition. What effect does their oppo-

sition produce? The text tells us *the result of human opposition upon Christ Himself,* and secondly, *upon the persons who offer it.*

I. Let us consider, in the first place, then, THE RESULT OF THE UNBELIEF AND THE OPPOSITION OF MEN AGAINST THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. We are told that, as far as He is concerned, "The stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner"—in one word, it has not affected Him at all! The opposition of mankind has, by no means, and in no degree, lessened the glory which God has put upon His dear Son. The builders rejected the stone with disdain—"It shall not be built," they said, "in the temple of our hope." But, God has said, "It shall be the top stone," and the top stone it is, and shall be, despite all the opposition of earth or hell. The rage of puny man shall no more defeat the Lord than the anger of a gnat can affect the sun! Human opposition shall no more thwart the divine will than a withered leaf cast into Niagara can block the water flow. He that stumbles upon this stone shall be broken, but the stone itself will not be injured.

Observe how the Lord Jesus has been rejected of man and yet His cause has stood against all opposition. First came *the Jew*. He had the pride of race to maintain. Were not the Jews the chosen people of God? Was not Israel set apart by the Most High? Jesus comes preaching the gospel to every creature. He sends His disciples even to the Gentiles and therefore, the Jews will not have Him. They have been looking for a temporal prince. Jesus does not come with the magnificence they expected—He is a root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness—they see nothing of Solomon's splendor in the poor descendant of the dried-up stock of David. Therefore, "Away with Him! Let Him be crucified!" But the opposition of His countrymen did not defeat the cause of Christ. If rejected in Palestine, His Word was received in Greece. It triumphed in Rome, it passed onward to Spain, it found a dwelling place in Britain and at this day, it lights up the face of the earth! The persecution of the apostles at Jerusalem hastened the spread of the gospel, for they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word, so that Jewish enmity was overruled for good and the foolish builders were made subservient to the uplifting of the rejected headstone!

Next arose *the philosopher* to be the gospel's foe. Different schools of thought held sway over the more cultivated minds of the period and no sooner did Paul begin to preach, where these philosophies were known, than they called him a babbler. They heard what he had to say and condemned him as a fool. This resurrection from the dead, this doctrine of an incarnate God who suffered for human sin—it was too simple for them, too plain to fit in with their subtle philosophies. But though phi-

losophy made terrible inroads, for a while, on the church of God in the form of the gnostic heresy, did it really impede the chariot wheels of Christ? Did it conquer the faith? Oh no, my brethren, for at this day, where are these philosophies? Who now believes in the Stoics? Who would care to be called an Epicurean? These philosophies have passed away—the stone cut out of the mountain without hands has broken them in pieces! The stone from the sling of Christ has struck the heathen philosophy in the forehead. We see its corpse lying headless in many an ancient book, while the Son of David goes forth conquering and to conquer.

After those days, there came against the church of God the determined opposition of *the secular power*. The imperial authorities saw danger in Christianity. These peasants and boors and mechanics set up a new religion, a religion which spoke of another king, one Jesus. They met together on the first day of the week and sang hymns in His honor as to God. Moreover, they refused to keep the holy days of the gods, nor would they worship the images of the emperors, either departed or living. Everybody else paid homage to these imperial demons except these Christian people, so the secular power said, "We will put them down. Let them be dragged before the judgement seat. Let them be imprisoned, let them be stripped of their goods, and if that does not drive them out of this new doctrine, let us try the rack and such like tortures—and if that does not end them, let them die! Why cannot men worship the gods of their fathers? Thus, they tried to stamp out the faith of Jesus, crowding their prisons, flooding their theatres with blood, and wearying the executioners. All that cruelty could do was done! But, my brethren, what was the result? The more the Christians were oppressed, the more they multiplied! The scattering of the coals increased the conflagration. The tribunals of judgement became pulpits from which Christianity was preached and men who stood burning at the stake commanded mighty audiences, among which they proclaimed Jesus Christ as king! The martyr's courage made men inquire, "Is there not something here, the like of which we have never seen before?" And it was not long before imperial legions bowed before the cross of Christ and the Galilean had won the day.

Since that period, the church has been attacked in various modes. The Arian *heresy* assaulted the Deity of Christ, but the church of God delivered herself from the accursed thing, as Paul shook the viper into the fire. Then came popery, the antichrist, and counterfeit of His sacrifice. Now, they set up the cross of ivory, hung round with gems, to mimic the King of kings on His cross of shame. They thrust before us the crucifix of man's making instead of Jesus, Himself, upon the tree. Now, we are

asked to worship saints and relics and images, and I know not what else, and a *man* is lifted into the throne of the infallible God! Some timid minds fear that Jesus Christ, as a stone rejected, will be cast out of sight, while high over all, the "Vicar of Christ at Rome" shall be made the head of the corner, but the Lord will not allow it. Brethren, have faith in God and think not so! The differing modes of Popery, Roman and Anglican, shall pass away as all things else have done that withstood the cross and cause of Jesus Christ! Even as a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bears it and is gone forever, so shall all these disappear! Jesus Christ's holy gospel and Himself, the Savior, shall yet be set on high as a rock defying the billows! What a day that was when Luther's rough protest broke the silence of the dark ages! When the clear teaching of Calvin followed and the bold notes of Zwingle were heard and a thousand voices shouted in chorus! What a day was that when the nations awoke from their long sleep to lie no longer under priestly domination, resolute to be free! Cannot God, who sent one Reformation, send another? Be of good courage, for brighter days are on the way! There shall come yet greater awakenings! The Lord, the avenger of His church, shall yet arise and the stone which the builders disallowed, the same shall be the head stone of the corner!

By prophetic vision, I see gathering another opposition which will be as difficult to cope with as any that has gone before. I see mustering within the ranks of the church of God men who say they hate all creeds, meaning that they despise all truth. They are they who would gladly be ministers among us and yet tread under foot all that we hold sacred, not teaching, at first, the fullness of their infidelity, but little by little gathering courage to vent their unbelief and heresies! Credophobia is maddening many! They appear to fear lest they should believe *anything* and to hope that there is something good to be found in atheism, or devil worship—indeed, in all religions, except the only true one. We lift our earnest protest, but if it should be lost amidst the general popular clamor, and if the nations should be drunk, again, with the wine of this fornication and turn aside to error, what matters it to the ultimate success of the eternal cause? Yet has Jehovah set His King upon His holy hill of Zion and yet shall the ancient decree be fulfilled! The throne of Christ shall stand and the covenant sealed with blood shall be sure to all the chosen seed! Let us have comfort, for despite all that can be done by men or devils, not one elect soul shall be lost, not one soul redeemed by blood shall be snatched out of the Redeemer's hand! Christ shall not lose so much as a grain of glory neither in earth nor in heaven. His people's earnest contention for the faith shall honor Him. Their patient suffering shall give Him

praise—heaven shall be the sweeter rest to them and the brighter place of glory to them when He shall return with them from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, travailing in the greatness of His strength, having trod the winepress and overcome His foes. Then shall His rest be glorious and His joy complete!

Thus much, then, upon the effect of human opposition. "The stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner."

II. A far more painful subject must now occupy our attention, namely, THE CONSEQUENCE OF THIS OPPOSITION TO THE OPPOSERS. Let us dwell with great solemnity upon one or two points. When men stumble at the plan of salvation by Christ's sacrificial work, *what is it that they stumble at?* The reply must be a somewhat wide one, but it cannot possibly comprehend all the reasons for man's wicked opposition to his best friend.

Some stumble at the person of Christ. Jesus, they will admit, was a good man, but they cannot accept Him as co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. Oh, my hearer, if you would be saved, stumble not at this, for who but a God could save you? And how could the justice of God have been satisfied unless One of infinite nature had become the propitiation for sin? My soul falls gratefully back upon the doctrine of the Deity of Christ for her deepest comfort, and I pray that none of you may reject it, for be assured that, apart from it, there is no true ground of peace for the conscience.

Some stumble at His work. Many cannot see how Jesus Christ is become the propitiation for human guilt and we fear, the reason why they cannot see must lie in that Word of our Lord, "You believe not because you are not of My sheep." We fell, my brethren, not personally, but in *another*. It was our first father, Adam, who first ruined us, not we, ourselves. Perhaps it was because we so fell that it was possible for us to be restored. As we fell in another, there was a loophole for mercy, for the Lord, having dealt with us under one federal head, could justly deal with us under another federal head! And thus fallen in another, we now rise in another! As by the offense of one, the condemnation came upon all men, so by the righteousness of One does the forgiveness come to as many as believe in Him. The doctrine of substitution or representation begins at the fountain of human history and runs through its whole course. I beseech you, do not quibble with it! It is rich balm and comfort to us who have received it. It has turned our hell to heaven. The Spirit, by its means, has renewed our nature and has made us other than we were—and today we have no hope apart from the vicarious sacrifice of

Emmanuel. Oh that you who are objectors would accept that which today you stumble at!

Some stumble at Christ's teaching and what is it they stumble at in that? Sometimes it is because it is too holy—"Christ is too puritanical—He cuts off our pleasures." But it is not so. He denies us no pleasure which is not sinful. He multiplies our joys! The things which He denies to us are only joyous in appearance, while His commands are real bliss. "Still," say some, "His teachings are too severe." Yet from others I hear the opposite accusation, for when we preach free, objectors cry, "You encourage men in sin!" There is little chance of pleasing the sons of men, for what gratifies some, offends others. But truly, there is no just reason on either ground to stumble at the gospel, for though it does place good works where they should be placed, as *gifts* of the Spirit and not as things of merit, yet it is a gospel according to *holiness*, as those know who have proved its power.

We have found some object to the teachings of Christ because they are too humbling. He destroys self-confidence and He presents salvation to none but those who are lost. "This lays us too low," says one. Yet I have heard from the opposite corner of the house an objection to the gospel because it makes men proud, for some say, "How dare you speak of being certain that you are saved? That is a boastful speech and ill befits a lowly sinner." Friend, do not stumble at the blessed truth of God, for believers are certainly saved and may know it—and yet be all the humbler for the knowledge. You are humbled, it is true, by Christ, and laid low—but He exalts you in due time—and when He exalts you, by His grace, there is no fear of boasting, for boasting is excluded by grace.

Still, I have known others object that the gospel is too mysterious—they cannot understand it, they say. While again, from the other corner of the compass, I have heard the objection that it is too plain! This being saved by simply believing in Christ is too plain for many and too hard for others. Beloved, do not quibble at it for either reason. What if there are mysteries in it? Can you expect to comprehend all that *God* knows? Be teachable as a child and the gospel will be sweet to you.

We have known some who have stumbled at Christ on account of His people and truly, they have some excuse. They have said, "Look at Christ's followers, see their imperfections and hypocrisies!" But why judge the *Master* by His *servants?* I could weep while I confess how much there is of truth in your accusations, but let me beseech you—lay the fault at *our* door, not at our Master's—for there is nothing in His teaching that encourages our sinning, and none can be more severe towards hypocrisy than is Christ Jesus our Lord! This stumbling at His people is,

however, frequently founded on another reason. The lovers of the gospel, it is said, are generally very poor and unfashionable. To unite with them is to lose caste. Now, that is true and it always has been so. From the first day until now, the gospel has flourished most where there has been least care for fashion and honor among men. But, I know, if you are men, this will be a small concern with you. Only those who are not men, but mimics of men, care for these small matters. You, if your manhood is as it should be, will feel that to follow the truth barefooted, through the mire, is better than to ride with the lie in all her pomp. Besides, taking the great ones of the earth as a class, is their society so specially desirable? Are the rich so very virtuous? Are the great so peculiarly good? I think not. We have noble exceptions. There are a few who wear the coronet and yet will wear a crown in heaven, but taking them as a *class,* the honorable among men are no better than they should be. No order of men have more to answer for than kings and princes. At their will, human blood has flowed like water and nations have been consumed by famine and pestilence as the result of their wars. Why, then, account *their* favor to be so precious a thing? We can turn the tables upon those who sneer at Christ's servants for their lowness of rank, for before the eyes of God, the great ones are the most evil of all when they become leaders in iniquity. Now, if these are your objections, I pray God to give you grace to play the man and bear joyfully the reproach of Christ.

What does this stumbling at Christ cost the ungodly? I answer, it costs them a great deal. Those who make Him a rock of stumbling are great losers by it *in this life*. Opposition to Jesus is, to many men, a kicking against the pricks. When the eastern farmer drives his bullock and it moves amiss, he goads it. And if the bullock is not broken in, it kicks against the goad as soon as it is pricked—and the consequence is, it drives the goad into itself more deeply—and if it then kicks violently, the goad pierces and wounds it still more. It is so with rebellious men. Their persecutions hurt themselves—they cannot really injure our Lord. The hammer said, "I will break the anvil," and the anvil did not answer, but stayed in its place, while the hammer smote it day after day. Month after month, year after year, the anvil patiently received the blows, but after awhile the hammer broke, and though it did not say so, for it was too quiet to speak, the anvil might have said, "I have broken hundreds of hammers before, and I shall break hundreds more by patient endurance." It is so with Christ and His church, and His gospel—the persecutor may smite, and smite, and smite—the true Christian makes no reply, but patiently bears, and in the long run, that patient endurance will break the persecutor down. What anger it costs ungodly men to oppose

Christ! Some of them cannot let Him alone! They will rage and fume. Concerning Jesus, it is true that you must either love or hate Him—He cannot long be indifferent to you—and therefore, inward conflicts come to opposers.

I remember an ungodly man who was a raving hater of Christ. A Bible was brought into his house, he seized it and destroyed it in his wrath. He did not know that when his daughter went to bed her eyes were wet with tears at what her father had done and that the next night there was a New Testament under her head. When by-and-by, he found out that she attended the house of God, there were great threats and I do not know what, of blustering. But it was done, all the same for that, and his anger was patiently borne. "Well," he thought, "she is a foolish girl, it will end there," but very soon another daughter became pious and then he was furious. He took his wife into his counsels, to help him, but by her quivering manner, she betrayed that she did not like his proceedings. And after awhile, he found out that she, when he was away, had snuck into the little meeting house, too, and that she was feeling, with her daughters, the value of eternal things. Well, at least he had a boy left! The women were always fools, he said, but his boy, he hoped, would show more sense, and not be deluded. Like his father, he would never fall into superstition, would he? He would see about it and question him. What was his surprise to find the boy speak up like a man, and say, "Yes, Father, I believe as my sisters do, and I go to the house of God whenever I can, and I mean to do so." To his surprise, he found all his house inclined to hear the gospel and most of them believers in it! It did him no good to be in a passion about it, but he used to rave horribly, and I fear he thereby shortened his days. But the thing went on in spite of all he did—the servants of the house also joined the people at the meeting, and his laborers went in the same way. God intended to bless the family and the enemy was powerless to prevent it, though it cost him much anger and wrath.

Ah, what it costs some men *when they come to die!* In the days when persecution was more public than it is now, many persons were guilty of being informers against the Puritans or the Quakers. These traitors' deaths were, in many cases, appalling, not because of any peculiar pains they endured, but because how their persecuting innocent neighbors came up to their memory in their last moments. And some of them could not rest for crying out and making acknowledgment of the injustice that they had done to good men in hunting them into prisons for worshipping God. If any of you do not believe in Jesus and will not be saved by Him yourselves, I would recommend you to let Him and His people alone, for

if you oppose Him, you will be the losers, He will not. Your opposition is utterly futile! Like a snake biting a file, you will only break your own teeth. You cannot hurt the church, nor hurt the Word of God. Perhaps your very opposition is one cog in the wheel to urge it on. If the things are of God, it is in vain that you fight against them. Be as wise as Haman's wife when she warned her husband that if Mordecai was of the seed of the Jews, before whom he had begun to fall, it was no use to take up the clubs against him. This warning was proven to be true when Haman was hung upon the gallows fifty cubits high! To oppose the royal seed of heaven is of no use whatever, but assures ruin to those who engage in it.

Now, suppose a man says, "I am not going to believe that Jesus Christ came into this world and died for the guilty, neither will I have Him for my Savior! I will run the risks." Well, remember, if you do it, it is at your own cost. Do it if you dare. Many years ago a captain was sent out in one of the government ships, the *Thetis*, to discover a shoal, a rock, or some other obstruction said to exist in the Mediterranean Sea. The captain was an old salt who knew little about navigation as a science, and cared less for rules, books, theories, and so on. He always sneered at scientific works. Though he sailed near the spot, he did not discover the rock and came back. But one of his officers was persuaded that, nevertheless, there was something in the report. So, sometime after, when he had become, himself, a first officer in another vessel, he sailed near the spot and discovered it. It was marked on the charts of the Admiralty and he received a considerable reward for having made the discovery. The old captain cursed and swore at these newfangled fellows who could find what he could not! He would not believe the shoal was there—one thing he would do—they might call him a liar if he did not drive the Thetis right over the spot where the rock was marked and so prove it to be all nonsense. He had an opportunity, sometime later, when he was out upon a cruise. He sailed close to the spot marked on the chart, and thinking he had passed over it, he cried out to those who were standing round, with many expressions of blasphemy, that he had proved these whippersnappers to be fools and liars! Just as he uttered his boast there came a crash, the ship was on the rock, and in a few minutes she was sinking. By the good providence of God, all on board escaped except the captain; he was in such a desperate state of mind that when last he was seen he was on deck in his shirt sleeves rushing about as if he had gone mad! You see, his firm belief that there was no rock there did not alter the case—he was wrecked for his obstinacy.

There are a great many who say, "Oh, I do not believe it, I shall not bother my head about it." Well, you are warned! You are warned, re-

member that! There is a way of salvation by Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, and we implore you to accept it. If you do not, this rock of unbelief will be your eternal shipwreck. I pray God that every one of us may bow before Christ and accept Him as our King. He will shortly come to be our judge! Oh, let us worship Him as our Mediator! Look to Him! Look to Him on His cross, for you must soon look to Him on His throne. Look to His wounds! Behold the atoning blood! Look to Him and find salvation! Whether you look to Him now or not, you will have to look to Him in that day when heaven and earth shall rock and reel, the trumpet shall sound, the dead shall rise and *you* among them! Then the books shall be opened and the sentence of eternal wrath shall be uttered against the disobedient and unbelieving! God save us all for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Peter 2.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—118, 2, 961.

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.

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JESUS, THE DELIGHT OF HEAVEN
NO. 1225

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

"And they sung a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and have made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."
Revelation 5:9, 10.

IF you want to know a man's character, it is well to inquire at his home. What do his children and servants think of him? What is the estimate formed by those who are always with him? George Whitefield was once asked his opinion of a person and his answer was very wise, for he replied, "I never lived with him." Beloved brethren in Christ, see what an estimate is formed of your Lord at home up yonder, where they know Him best and see Him most constantly, and in the clearest light! They have discovered no faults in Him. The angels, who have beheld Him ever since they were created, the redeemed who have been with Him, some of them for thousands of years, have found no spot in Him. Their unanimous verdict expressed freely in joyful song is, "You are worthy; You are worthy; You are worthy."

If you desire to know a man, it will be well to find out what the best sort of people think of him, for the good opinion of bad men is worthless. "What have I done," said one of the Greek philosophers, "that you speak well of me?" when he found himself applauded by a man of evil character! A character that comes from men fitted to judge, who know what purity is, who have had their eyes opened to discriminate between virtue and its counterfeit—such a character is well worth having! One would not like to be thought ill of by a saint. We value the esteem of those whose judgement is sound, who are free from prejudice and who love only that which is honest and of good repute. Now, beloved, see what your Lord is thought of in the best society! Where they are all *perfect*! Where they are no longer children, but are all able to judge! Where they live in a clear light and are free from prejudice! Where they cannot make a mistake! See what they think of Him! They, themselves, are without fault be-

fore the throne of God but they do not think themselves worthy—they ascribe worthiness to Jesus only. None stood up to take the book from the open hand of the great King. When they saw the Lamb do so, they felt that it was His right to take that prominent and honorable position—and with one accord they said, "You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for You were slain." You and I cannot have too lofty thoughts of Jesus. We err in not thinking enough of Him. Let our estimate of Him grow and let us cry with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" Oh, for great thoughts of Jesus! Oh, to set Him on the highest imaginable throne in the conceptions of our soul, and to make every power and faculty of our manhood fall prostrate, like the elders before Him, while whatever of honor God may put upon us, we cast always at His feet, and always say, with heart and lip and act, "You are worthy, Jesus, Emmanuel, Redeemer, who have purchased us by Your blood. Worthy are You, worthy forever and forever."

It is to the estimate of the perfect spirits that I would call your attention. What do you think of Christ, you glorified ones, with whom we shall so soon unite? We have your answer in the words we have read. "You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and have made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

I. Notice, first, that the bright ones before the throne adore the Lord Jesus as WORTHY OF THE HIGH OFFICE OF MEDIATOR. They adore Him as alone worthy of that office, for there was silence in heaven when the roll was held in God's hand and the challenge was given, "Who is worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof?" Dumb were the four living creatures. Silent were the cherubim and seraphim—in mute solemnity sat the 24 elders on their thrones. They put in no claim for worthiness, but by their silence, and their subsequent song when Christ came forward, they admitted that He, alone, could unfold the purposes of God and interpret them to the sons of men. I take it that one of the meanings of our Lord's taking the book into His hand was this—that He was *the fulfiller* of that mysterious roll so closely sealed. He came to unfold it and, by transactions in which He should hold the chief place, it was to be fulfilled. The key of the purposes of God is Christ. We do not know what the decrees of God may be until they are fulfilled, but we do know that of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, and that everything will begin and end with Jesus, for He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He is the initial letter of all history and He

will be the "finis" of it when He shall give up the throne to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all.

As our Lord Jesus is the fulfiller, so He is *the interpreter*. He has been with the Father and, "No man knows the Father save the Son, and He to whom the Son shall reveal Him." He is the great interpreter to us of the mind of God. His Spirit, dwelling in us, takes of His things and shows them unto us. And in the light of the Spirit, we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. "No man comes to the Father," He says, "but by Me," for no man can expound the Father to us or conduct us to the Father save Jesus Christ, the sole interpreter of the divine secret. And so I regard the expressions here as setting Him forth as Mediator, for He it is who stands between God and man. He is worthy to take the book in His hands on our behalf and grasp for us the indentures of our inheritance beyond the stars. No one else can go in for us to the august presence of the Most High and take the title deeds of grace into His hands on our behalf. But Christ can do it and, taking it, He can unfold it and expound to us the wondrous purpose of electing love towards the chosen ones. Stand back, you sons of antichrist, with your bronze foreheads! How dare you bring forward a virgin, blessed among women, and cause her very name to be defiled by styling her our intercessor before God? How dare you bring your saints and make these to mediate between God and men? "There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." The saints in heaven sing of Him, "You are worthy," and they salute none other! They reserve no homage for any other intercessor or mediator or interpreter or fulfiller of divine grace, for they know of no other. Unto Him they give, and to Him alone, the honor to go in unto the King on the behalf of the sons of men, and to take the book in His hands.

Notice carefully to what they ascribe this worthiness—"You are worthy to take the book and open the seals thereof, *for you were slain."* Now, the case stands thus—God has given to us innumerable blessings in the covenant of grace—but they are given upon a *condition*. There are two sides to a covenant. Jesus Christ is our representative and covenant-head, and the condition which, as the Mediator, He had to fulfill was this—that in due time, He would offer to divine justice an honorable amend for all the injury done to the honor of God by our sins. As Mediator, our Lord's worthiness did not merely arise from His Person as God and perfect man—this fitted Him to undertake the office, but His right to claim the privileges written in the Magna Charta which God held in His hands, His right to take possession for His people of that seven-sealed indenture lies in this—that He has fulfilled the condition of the covenant and, therefore, they sing, "You are worthy, for You were slain." Not, "You are worthy, for

You were born on earth and You did live a holy life," but, "You were slain." For He must render recompense to incensed justice and injured holiness—and that He did upon the bloody tree.

Whenever we begin to talk about this, the believers in the *modern atonement*—which is no atonement, but a hazy piece of cloudland—say to us, "Oh, you hold the commercial theory, do you?" They know right well that we only use, because the Bible uses them, commercial expressions as metaphors. But I venture to say to them, "You may well assert that there is nothing commercial about your system, for the commercial value of a counterfeit farthing would be too much to pay for the atonement in which *you* believe." I believe in an atonement in which Christ *literally* took the sin of His people and for them endured the wrath of God, giving to justice *quid pro quo* for all that was due to it, or an equivalent for it—bearing, that we might not bear, the wrath that was due to us. Jesus, Himself, really "bore our sins in His own body on the tree." "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." There was a *literal*, positive, actual substitution of "the just for the unjust to bring us to God." No other atonement is worth the breath used in preaching of it. It will neither give comfort to the conscience nor glory to God. But on this rock, our souls may rest without fear and it is because of this that they sing in heaven, "You are worthy, *for You were slain*. You can claim our absolution—You can take the Magna Charta of Your elect into Your hands and unroll the covenant established with them of old. You can reveal to us the sure mercies of David, for Your part in the covenant has been fulfilled. Your substitutionary death has made Your people heirs with You." Gladly would I fly yonder to join their song, but till then, I'll lisp it forth as best I may—"You are worthy to take the book and open the seals thereof, for You were slain."

II. Secondly, in heaven, they adore the Lord as their REDEEMER. "You were slain, *and have redeemed us to God by Your blood."*

The metaphor of redemption, if I understand it, signifies this—a thing which is redeemed, in the strictest sense, belonged beforehand to the person who redeemed it. Under the Jewish law, lands were mortgaged as they are now. And when the money lent upon them, or the service due for them, was paid, the land was said to be redeemed. An inheritance first belonged to a person and then went away from him by stress of poverty. But if a certain price was paid, it came back. Now, "All souls are Mine" says the Lord, and the souls of men belong to God. The metaphor is used and, mark, these expressions are but *metaphors*. But the sense under them is no metaphor—it is fact. Our souls had come under mortgage, as it were, through the sin committed, so that God could not accept

us without violating His justice until something had been done by which He, who is infinitely just, could freely distribute His grace to us. Now, Jesus Christ has taken the mortgage from God's inheritance. "The Lord's portion is His people." That portion was hampered till Jesus set it free. We were always God's, but we had fallen into slavery to sin. Jesus came to make recompense for our offenses, and thus, we return to where we were before, only with additional gifts which His grace bestows. In heaven, they say, "You have redeemed us." And they tell the price, "You have redeemed us to God *by Your blood."* There lay the price—the sufferings and death of Jesus have set His people free from the slavery into which they were brought. They are redeemed and they are redeemed unto God. That is the point—they come back to God as lands come back to the owner when the mortgage is discharged. We come back to God, again, to whom we always and ever did belong, because Jesus has redeemed us unto God by His blood.

And please notice that the redemption they sing about in heaven is not *general* redemption. It is *particular* redemption. "You have redeemed *us* to God by Your blood *out of* every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." They do not speak of the redemption of every tongue, and people, and nation, but of a redemption *out of* every tongue, and people, and nation! I thank God I do not believe that I was redeemed in the same way that Judas was, and no more. If so, I shall go to hell as Judas did. General redemption is not worth anything to anybody, for of itself, it secures to no one a place in heaven—but the special redemption which does redeem, and redeems men *out of* the rest of mankind—is the redemption that is to be prayed for, and for which we shall praise God forever and ever. We are redeemed from among men. "Christ loved His church and gave Himself for it." "He is the Savior of all men"—let us never deny that—"but especially of them that *believe*." There is a wide, far-reaching sacrificial atonement which brings untold blessings to all mankind, but by that atonement a special divine object was aimed at, which will be carried out—and that object is the actual redemption of His own *elect* from the bondage of their sins—the price being the blood of Jesus Christ. Oh, brethren, may we have a share in this particular, efficient redemption, for this alone can bring us where they sing the new song!

This redemption is one which is personally realized. You have redeemed *us* to God. Redemption is sweet, but, "You have redeemed *us"* is sweeter still! If I can but believe He loved me, and gave Himself for *me*, that will tune my tongue to sing Jehovah's praise, for what did David say? "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness." He repeated that several times over, but it would never have been carried out unless

he had said, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed out of the hand of the enemy." In vain, he called upon others—their tongues were dedicated to their pleasures! But the redeemed of the Lord are a fit choir to magnify His name.

The heart of what I have to say is this—in heaven, they praise Jesus Christ because He has redeemed them—my dear hearer, has He ever redeemed you? "Oh," says one, "I believe He has redeemed everybody!" But of what use is that? Do not the great mass of mankind sink to perdition? If you rest upon such a redemption, you rest upon what will not save you! He redeemed His own elect, or, in other words, He redeemed believers. "God so loved the world" is a text much cried up, but pray go on with it. How much did He love the world? "That He gave His only begotten Son *that whoever believes in Him* should not perish."

There is the specialty of it—"Whoever believes in Him," and if you do *not* believe in Him, you have no part or lot in His redemption! You are slaves to sin and Satan, and so will you live and so will you die. But believing in the Lord Jesus, you have the marks of being specially and effectually redeemed by Him. And when you get to heaven, this will be your song—"You have redeemed us unto God by Your blood out of every kindred, and people, and tongue." Blessed be God for this! Some of all sorts are saved, some of all colors, ranks, nations, and ages are saved! Some of all conditions of education and morals, some of the poorest, and some of the richest are redeemed—so that when we all assemble in heaven, though we make a motley throng on earth, we shall constitute a united choir, having all our voices tuned to this one note, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

III. Thirdly, and briefly, in heaven, they praise Christ, not merely as Mediator and as Redeemer, but as the DONOR OF THEIR DIGNITIES. They are kings and they reign. We, too, are kings, but as yet we are not known or recognized, and often we, ourselves, forget our high descent. Up there, they are crowned monarchs, but they say, *"You have made us kings."* They are priests, too, as we are now, every one of us. When a fellow comes forward in all sorts of curious garments and says he is a priest, the poorest child of God may say, "Stand away and don't interfere with my office—*I am a priest*—I know not what *you* may be. You surely must be a priest of Baal, for the only mention of the word *vestments* in Scripture is in connection with the temple of Baal." The priesthood belongs to all the saints! They sometimes call you laity, but the Holy Spirit says of all the saints, "You are God's *cleros"*—you are God's clergy. Every child of God is a clergyman or a clergywoman. There are no priestly distinctions known in Scripture. Away with them! Away with them forever!

The Prayer-book says, "Then shall the *priest* say." What a pity that word was ever left there. The very word, "priest," has such a smell of the sulfur of Rome about it, that so long as it remains, the Church of England will give forth an ill savor. Call yourself a priest, sir? I wonder men are not ashamed to take the title, when I remember what priests have done in all ages—what priests connected with the church of Rome have done! I repeat what I have often said—I would sooner a man pointed at me in the street and called me a devil than called me a priest, for bad as the devil has been, he has hardly been able to match the crimes, cruelties, and villainies which have been transacted under the cover of a special priesthood. From that, may we be delivered! But the priesthood of God's saints, the priesthood of holiness, which offers prayer and praise unto God—*this* they have in heaven, and they say of it, *"You have made us priest*s." What the saints are, and what they are to be, they ascribe to Jesus. They have no glory but what they received from Him, and they know it, and are perpetually confessing it.

Let our hearts sing with the redeemed—"All *for* Jesus, for all is *from* Jesus! All for Jesus, for Jesus has given us all we have." Let us begin that music here.

IV. Once again. They in heaven adore the Savior as DIVINE.

I am not straining the words of my text at all, but keeping the whole passage before me. If you read the two chapters, you will find that, while they sing to God, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive honor and glory and power," they sing to the Lamb, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom." The ascriptions which are given to the Creator are also offered to the Lamb, and He is represented as sitting on the same throne. Mark carefully that the adoration which they give to Him, He does not resent. When John fell down to worship one of the angels, he received an earnest protest, "See you do it not." Now, if the worship given to Christ had been wrong, the thrice holy Savior would have exclaimed most earnestly, "See you do it not." But He intimates no objection to the worship, although it is freely rendered by all the intelligent beings before the throne. Depend upon it, my hearer, you will never go to heaven unless you are prepared to worship Jesus Christ as God. They are all doing it there—you will have to come to it—and if you entertain the notion that He is a mere *man,* or that He is anything *less* than God, I am afraid you will have to begin at the beginning and learn what true religion means. You have a poor foundation to rest upon. I could not trust my soul with a mere man, or believe in an atonement made by a mere man! I must see God Himself putting His hands to so gigantic a work. I

cannot imagine a mere man being thus praised as the Lamb is praised. Jesus is, "God over all, blessed forever."

When we ever speak at all severely of Socinians and Unitarians, you must not be surprised at it, because if we are right, they are blasphemers! And if they are right, we are idolaters—there is no choice between the two. We never could agree and never shall while the world stands. We preach Christ, the Son of God, as very God of very God, and if they reject Him, it is not for us to pretend that it makes no difference, when, in fact, it makes all the difference in the world! We would not wish them to say more than they believe to be true, and they must not expect us to say less than we believe to be true. If Jesus is God, they must believe it, and must worship Him as such, or else they cannot participate in the salvation which He has provided. I love the Deity of Christ! I preach His humanity with all my might, and I rejoice that He is the Son of Man, but oh, He must be the Son of God, too, or there is no peace for me—

"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 Emmanuel's face appears,
My hope, my joy begins:
His name forbids my slavish fear;
His grace removes my sins."

Now, I have almost done, only this is the outcome of the subject. You see the opinion they have of Jesus in heaven. My dear friends, are you of the same mind with them? You will never go there till you are! There are no sects in heaven—no two parties. They all hold the same views about Jesus. Let me ask you, then, are you of the same persuasion as the glorified saints? They praise Jesus *for what He has done*. It is very wonderful to my mind that when they are adoring the Savior they seem to strike that one key—they praise Him for what He has done—and they praise Him for what He has done for *them*. They might have praised Him for what He *is,* but in the text they do not. Now, this reason which has such say in heaven is the very same which moves us here—"We love Him because He first loved us," and as if to show that this kind of love is not an inferior love, the love of gratitude seems to be the very sum and substance of the love of heaven—"You were slain, and have redeemed us." Can you praise Him for redeeming you?

Dear hearer, you have heard about Jesus hundreds of times. Has He saved *you*? You know there is a fountain filled with blood which cleanses from all sin—has it cleansed *you*? You know He has woven a robe of righteousness which covers His people from head to foot—has He covered

you with it? You will never praise Him till that is the case—and you cannot go to heaven till you are ready for His praise. "Well, but I go to my place of worship." So you may. But *that* will not save you till you get a personal hold on Christ for yourself. "My mother and father were godly people." I am glad they were. I hope they won't have an ungodly son. You must have a *personal* religion—something done by Jesus Christ *for you*. Young woman over yonder, has Jesus Christ redeemed you from among the mass of the people? Has He brought you out from your sins and separated *you* to Himself? Have you had the blood applied to *your* soul—the precious blood of sprinkling which speaks peace in the conscience? Time is flying and you have been hearers month after month—will it always be so? Will you never cry unto God, "Lord, let me know Your redemption! Let me have a share in the precious blood! Let me be washed from my sins"? Remember, you must be able to praise Him for what He has done *for you,* or else you are not of the opinion of those in heaven and into heaven you cannot go!

It is clear from the song I have been reading that, in heaven, Christ is everybody and everything. Is Christ so with you? It is a solemn question to put to persons. Is Christ first and last and middle with you, top and bottom, foundation and pinnacle, all in all? He knows not Christ who does not know that Christ is all in all! Christ and company will never do. Christ is the sole Savior, the sole Trust, the one Prophet, Priest and King to all who accept Him. Is He everything to *you?* Ah, there are some who *think* they love Christ! They *think* they trust Christ! But if He were to come to their house, He would have a seat at the far end of the table if they treated Him as they treat Him now. They give Him *part* of the Sabbath—they were loafing about all the morning, they were only able to get here this evening—and even now, they have not come to worship, but only out of curiosity. A chapter in the Bible—how long is it, young man, since you read one? Private prayer—ah, I must not go into *that!* It is such a sorry story that you would have to tell. If anybody said to you, "You are not a Christian," you would be offended. Well, I will say it, and you may be offended if you like, but remember you *should* be offended with *yourself* rather than with me. If you offend my Lord, I am not at all afraid of your being offended with His servant, and therefore I tell you, if Christ is anything short of Lord and King in your soul, Christ and you are wide apart! He must be in the front rank, Lord High Admiral upon the sea, and Commander-in-Chief on the land. He is not going to be a petty officer, to come in at your odd times to be a lackey to you! You must take Him to be Head, Lord, and Master. Is it so with you? If not, you differ from those in heaven, for He is all in all to them!

Once more. Can you join with the words of our text and say, "He is worthy, He is worthy"? I hope there are many here who, if they for a moment heard that full burst of song, "He is worthy," would join it very heartily, and say, "Yes, He is worthy." I seemed, tonight when I was praying, as if I could hear them sing, "He is worthy," and I could hardly restrain myself from shouting, "Well sing you so, you spirits before the throne! He is worthy!" If we were to loose our silence for a moment, and break the decorum which we have observed through the sermon, and with one unanimous shout cry, "Yes, He is worthy," I think it would be a fit thing to do! Jesus is worthy of my life, worthy of my love, worthy of everything I can say for Him! He is worthy of a thousand times more than that, worthy of all the music and harps on earth, worthy of all the songs of all the sweetest singers, worthy of all the poetry of the best writers, worthy of all the adoration of every knee! He is worthy of all that every man has, or can conceive or can compass! He is worthy to be adored of all that are in the earth and under the earth, and in the sea, and in the heavens, and in the heaven of heavens! He is worthy!

We say, "Worthy," because we cannot tell how worthy. I think these good singers in heaven desired to give to the Lamb His due and then they paused, and said to themselves, "We cannot give Him the praise He deserves, but we know that He is worthy. We cannot pretend to give Him what He is worthy of, but we will say, 'He is worthy.'" Yes, He is worthy! If I had 50,000 lives in this poor body, He is worthy that they should all be poured out, one after another, in martyrdom! One should be burned alive, and another should be broken on the wheel, and another should be starved by inches, and another should be dragged at the heels of a wild horse—and He would deserve them all! He is worthy, and if we had all the mines of India—silver and gold and gems, the rarest treasures of all the kings that ever lived, if we were to give it all up to Him and go barefoot—He is worthy! And if, after having done that, we were to abide day and night in perpetual work without rest, all for His sake, and if each one of us were multiplied into a million, and all of us labored so, He is worthy! Worthy! I would make every drop of dew sparkle with His praise and every leaf in the forest bear His name! I would make every dell and every mountain vocal with adoration and teach the stars, and teach the angels above the stars, His praise—

"Oh for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise!"

Let time and space become one mouth for song, and all eternity sound forth that mighty word, "He is worthy." Do you feel that He is worthy? If you do *not,* you cannot be admitted where they sing that song, for if you

could enter there, you would be unhappy. Never hope to enter there until your soul can say, "I have rested in His blood. I am, by it, redeemed unto God and the Redeemer is worthy! And I will bear witness of His worthiness till time shall be no more."

God bless you all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Revelation 4:5.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—412, 416, 417.

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

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THE SECRET OF HEALTH
NO. 1226

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 25, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God." Psalm 42:11.

ANOTHER verse in this psalm so attracts me that, though it is not my text, I cannot pass it by without a moment's notice. In the 5th verse, the psalmist says, "I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance," and then follows the expression of the text, "who is the health of my countenance and my God." God's countenance is our help and He, Himself, is the health of *our* countenance! The best help a man can have in time of trouble is the countenance of God! If he feels that he enjoys the divine love and that he is acceptable with the Lord, he becomes, at once, strong to bear, or dare, or do. Ask the presence of God to be with you, child of God, and you may then descend into a lion's den, traverse a fiery furnace, or pass through the iron gates of death! A look from the Lord is life and strength to His people! So much for the 5th verse. Now, let us weave our text with it. This help of God's countenance usually comes to believers by their obtaining health for their countenances. It may not please God to lessen the burden, but it comes to the same thing if He strengthens the back. He may not recall the soldier from the battle, but if He gives him a greater stomach for the fight, and increased strength for its toils, it may be better, still, for him. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Give a man health in his countenance and he laughs at that which would have crushed him had he been in another mood. There are times when the grasshopper becomes a burden, and there are other seasons, when, with undaunted spirit, we can say, "Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain." Everything depends upon the man's personal condition. For the diseased eyes, beauty does not exist. For the disordered palate, sweetness is no longer to be found. And to a deaf ear, harmony is silent.

Our happiness depends more upon our own personal condition than upon our surroundings. The great thing to be desired by all of us is that we may, in spirit, soul, and body, be whole, that is, to be holy, for *holiness* is, in very truth, wholeness of our entire manhood! Sin is disease. Righteousness is health. We all need to be healed, that being healed, we may be healthy—that receiving the divine restoration, our nature may arrive at perfect soundness. Through the fall and our own sins, we have become the prey of manifold maladies and need the exercise of divine power to bring us back into that sacred sanity of nature in which God first created man—when He made him in His own image and saw, con-

cerning him and the world in which He had placed him, that it was very good. Of our complete manhood's health, I shall speak this morning. And while I speak of it, may the Lord be pleased to make all of us see that *He* is the health of our countenance and our God.

I. Our first remark is one which naturally grows out of the text, though it may seem a very trite one, namely, that PERFECT HEALTH IS A GREAT BLESSING. Do not misunderstand me by narrowing my words in their application. I am not speaking of the health of the body, *alone*, for to say that bodily health is a blessing were but to assert what no one disputes. Man, however, is something more than a body. He is also a living soul. Yes, more—there is in the *regenerate* man, a *triple* nature, consisting of body, soul, and spirit. Even in you, who are unregenerate, there is a *double* nature of body and soul. I would hope you have been born again and have reached the triple nature, and possessed that higher principle which is born of God, but even *you* are not all comprised in mere flesh. And when I speak of your *health,* I mean the health of your entire being. Perfect health lies in the right condition of spirit, soul, and body. Complete health in heaven will be ours when our body has been raised from the dead, incorruptible—our soul has been cleansed from all defilement, our new-born spirit has come to its full development—our entire manhood shall be glorified!

This universal health of our manhood is invaluable, *for it was that which made our first Paradise*. Man was not happy in Eden merely because the fruits were luscious and delicious, as were the odors of the flowers which grew in the garden of delights, but because no disease of sin had tainted any part of his nature. His bodily appetites had not gained predominance over his mental faculties, neither had he suffered any of his mental powers to override the rest, or permitted the pride of knowledge to stay the childlike spirit which adored the great Father. His being was well balanced and all its powers were in a perfect condition. Adam was in all respects such as God would have man to be, for he was such as God had actually made him. As in a perfect machine which comes fresh from the maker's hand, every wheel acts upon its fellow and the whole is obedient to the central mainspring—and so was Adam's nature in complete order. Alas for us that it ever became otherwise!

As perfect health was our first happiness, so it will be our last and eternal happiness, for heaven is not merely streets of gold and harps of melodious music and winged creatures strangely bright—it is perfection realized! The slough of depravity cast off, the soul shall be herself again, and of manhood it shall be said, "His flesh is fresher than a child's, and he has returned to the days of his youth." Spiritual health, then, was the first Paradise and we can never reach the second except by its recovery. No forgiveness of sin, no imputation of righteousness, no justification by faith, if such could be apart from an *inward* change—could make a man happy so long as he is sick of soul. Health must reign *within*, or a throne in heaven would be a mockery!

Today, a measure of health is essential to our happiness. If any man here burns with the fever of lust, he cannot be a happy man. In the fierce

heat of passion, he may *think* himself blessed, but he dares not deny that, in those intervals of chill remorse which alternate with the heat of passion, woe and anguish are his portion! Anger, envy, revenge, covetousness, discontent, pride and self-will are all diseases fatal to happiness. Perhaps some man before me is utterly given up to worldliness and lethargy has seized upon him. And in the deadness of that lethargy he complains of no pain whatever, but finds a happiness in the numbness of spiritual death. May God deliver you from this hideous peace, this horrible stupefaction, for it is not true happiness but the herald of eternal death! Absolute happiness, that which will bear close examination—real joy, peace, felicity—can never come to a man while one part of his nature jars with the other! He must be right with himself. The little universe of our nature cannot sing in harmony till its central sun of faith, its planetary affections, and even those imaginations which are comparable to the comets, are each and all in their fit spheres and orbits. Then, as they all, like the heavens, declare the glory of God, all will be well. We must be spiritually healthy or we cannot be happy.

The want of this health is the cause of a thousand ills. This world we complain of full often, but it were no longer the prison-house of sorrow if it ceased to be the theater of sin. If man were man, as God made him, the earth would soon regain her excellency, and her deserts would blossom as the rose. If men were not *sinners*, neither would they be *sufferers*. Thorns and thistles would be no longer a curse, but would be counted among flowers, if men had not thorns within their bosoms and thistles in their hearts. On the way of holiness, no lion or ravenous beast could go up, for of the perfect man it is written, "You shall be in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be in peace with you." Cast out sin and you have cast out the serpent whose slime has made this world so foul. Cut down this upas tree and numberless griefs and torments will no more drip upon mankind.

We may judge of the value of health when we remember that *it cannot be purchased*. You cannot buy deliverance from bodily disease. What would we not give if we could? We would seek out, at any expense, the physician whose fee is highest, and we would not refuse to fill his hands with gold could he but give us ease. But no, when God chastens, the rod will not be quiet. As for the health of the soul and spirit, the miser's bags, if they were emptied out, could not purchase it for a moment! No, the very fact that he hoped so to win it would be, in itself, a disease, for what are trust in riches and reliance upon self-righteousness but forms of pride, which is one of the most deadly of our sicknesses?

You cannot buy health for your nature! Your tears cannot procure it! Your works, your repentances, your prayers cannot find it apart from God! He is the health of your countenance. Bless Him that He is so. Were it not for this, your whole head would continue sick, and your whole heart faint. There is no balm in Gilead, there is no physician there. God, alone, is the healer of the soul and freely does He bestow what India, with its gems, and California, with its gold, cannot procure.

If we are without this health, *nothing can compensate us for the loss of it*. You, who have been sick, know that nothing can make up for the agony of pain or the misery of inability to move your limbs. Those weary nights and long days of anguish can not be recompensed by gold and silver. So, unless you become right in soul and spirit with your God, nothing can help you. You may put on the garb of religion. You may learn the tones and mannerisms of Christians. You may sing the songs of saints. You may think that you could play the music of angels, but, "You must be born again!" You must be recovered from sin's mortal malady! You must be purged from the foul leprosy of evil, for you are polluted, and until you are recovered, you cannot come into the tabernacles of the Lord, nor stand in His holy place. Without holiness, which is another word for wholeness or health, no man can see the Lord.

If this health of ours is not found, let us be warned that it will be eternal hell, for what is hell? Is it not consummated sin? What are the fetters of the condemned, but their own tyrant passions? The fires that burn, and yet do not consume, will they not be ungratified desires? The worm that never dies, will it not be a tormenting conscience? The man, himself, is his own hell! True, there may be, over and above this, penalties from the hand of the Lord, for what are we that we should pretend to know the secrets of the dreadful prison? There may be positive inflictions from the divine hand, but without these, there is misery enough in despair and torment abundant in remorse. If a man were taken up to heaven, itself, and were surrounded with all the circumstances which assist the blessed to express their joy, yet there he would burn and there he would gnash his teeth, and there he would weep and wail, if still his breast was cankered with enmity to God and his heart palpitated with fierce and strong passions. Within ourselves must ever be the essential heaven, or the actual hell. There lies the main business, sir. You are sick and must be cured, or you are damned, for your sickness is only the beginning of damnation. Sir, you were born with a cancer in your bosom, which will one day flood your whole nature with its horrible loathsomeness! And then will come the time of your misery! You must be cured, or else a doom awaits you which language cannot describe.

Assuredly, I have said enough to show that manhood's perfect health is the greatest of blessings, and I proceed to the next point.

II. Our text joyfully asserts, secondly, that GOD IS OUR HEALTH.

"Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." God is our health! He is so in these senses, that, first of all, He is *the originator of health* which once was enjoyed by man. There was, in the primeval days, one perfect man—no, there was one perfect *pair*, upon the face of the earth. And these possessed a total sanity because God, who is, Himself, holy, had made them whole or holy, and they were perfect in their ways from the day they were created till iniquity was found in them. They were made a little lower than the angels, but they wore a glory and honor about them which made all the lower creatures obedient to their command. That beauty of holiness was the work of God who made man upright and caused his countenance to

beam with health. He who made the first man pure must make *us* pure, or we shall never be pure.

But again, God is the health of our countenance because *our relation to Him is the test of our health*. Just what you are to God—*that* you really are! It is good to stand well with your fellow men. To love your neighbor as yourself is right and just. But He who made us has the first claim upon us. Our Creator should, first of all, have the love and loyalty of our hearts. If He is not the chief object of our thoughts, depend upon it, we are wrong. Whatever we may be in our relation to others, we are sadly wrong if we are disarranged towards God. If you do not love God, you do not love Him who is the holiest, the purest and the best. If you do not love God, it is certain that you do not love essential goodness, truth, justice, and purity. You complain that the character of God is so much above you—then how low must you be? You assert that you cannot think of Him as your Father—but we would have you remember that when a child cannot think of its father as its father, its heart must be alienated, indeed. Do you ever judge yourselves in relation to God? Men seldom do, and when they use expressions which concern this relationship, they generally misuse them. I have noted in this place, before, that if we call a man, a *sinner*, he is not offended with us, for that only means that he disobeys the law of God. But if we call him a *criminal*, he is indignant, because that means that he has broken the laws of *man*. Alas, that our relation to man should seem to be so much more important than our connection with God! To set man before God is unrighteous and shows the essential injustice of unrenewed hearts, for when their hearts are set right, men feel that they would sooner a thousand times offend their fellow men than *once* offend their God, so that you may judge of your spiritual health by your relation to God. Do you love Him? Do you trust Him? Do you speak with Him? Do you pray to Him? Is He your friend? Is He your delight? Is His will your will? Do you take pleasure in that which pleases Him? Does your life run parallel with the life of God? It is well with you if things are so—it is on the way to being well with you if you *desire* to have them so. But if, on the contrary, God's will draws one way and you the other, the Lord cannot be wrong and you are clearly proven to be in an ill case. The Lord is holy. "Holy, holy, holy," say the angels, and if you are not like He is, you are *unholy*—that is, you are not whole, you are not spiritually in health—your nature is diseased. God is our health, then, because our relation to Him is the test of it.

Remember again, that *the Lord is the very model of health*. All perfections meet in Him. In God's nature, no single attribute ever intrudes upon another. You cannot find in God's character any one point of which you can say—"He is this alone, to the exclusion or overshadowing of other excellencies." God is love, but God is also a consuming fire. God is merciful, but God is true. God is great, but God is good. All excellencies are in Him in perfection. See whether you are like God then, for if you are not, you are not like the model of health. If the symptoms of your condition differ from the characteristics of God, you are unhealthy, for God is the standard of perfect holiness.

The text intends to teach us that *God must be to each one of us the restorer of our spiritual health*. If ever we recover soundness, He must restore us. The Sun of Righteousness must bring us healing. The heavenly wind of the Holy Spirit must drive away the pestilence of sin. The water of life must work our cure, the plant of renown must yield us balm. Man's malady demands a divine physician. Only omnipotent wisdom can make a man healthy, or keep him so. This body of ours is so complex and contains so many bones, cells, muscles, nerves, tissues, and blood vessels that, perhaps, it is the greatest miracle on the face of the earth that we live, or if there is a greater, it must be that we live at all in health. Dr. Watts well said—

"Strange that a harp of thousand strings,
Should keep in tune so long."

But when I think of the *soul*, it is so much more mysterious than the body, that to put a soul into proper conformity to God, and keep it right, would appear to be a greater wonder than anything which can be discovered by the physiologist in the anatomy of the body! O God, You alone made man, and You alone can deliver him from the evils which have unmade him, and bring him back to be what You would have him be. No hand but Yours must venture upon the task. They do but blunder who boast of regenerating with water. Blunder? No, they lie! God, alone, can regenerate a soul, and His Spirit must do it by that same mighty power which raised the Redeemer from the dead! Nothing short of omnipotence at its full can raise us from our natural sickness to spiritual health.

Spiritual health is produced by God's coming to us, for the only medicine for a sick soul is not something *out* of God, but God Himself! He could not cure us till He gave us His Son and His Son could not heal us till He gave us Himself. Today, the food of spiritual health is the flesh and blood of Jesus, and nothing keeps us from relapsing into sin but the indwelling of the eternal Spirit! Our health is our God, our God incarnate, our God dwelling in us, our God looking down from the throne of glory, and saying, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be My people." Jehovah Rophi, the Lord that heals you, this is Your name, O Lord, and by it we adore You!

III. But I must pass on to the third matter, namely, that THIS HEALTH HAS VISIBLE SIGNS. "He is the health *of my countenance."* The health of a man is mainly judged of by his face. Truly, you can tell something of it by his gait, and every limb of the body, more or less, evidences his condition—but the *countenance* is the window of the soul—the mirror which reflects the nature. True sanity towards God, or at any rate, the beginning of it in the work of grace, can be *seen*. It is not a close secret hidden from observation—it displays itself! A notion is abroad that perhaps a man may be saved and not know it. He may be alive unto God *unconsciously.* He may be washed in the blood of Jesus without knowing it, so that he may live without discovering his own salvation and only find it out by the help of a priest as he is dying. There is nothing like that in the Word of God! Nothing of the kind! That may be the version of the Vatican, but it is not the version of the New Jerusalem. Read the Scrip-

tures and you find men talk about, "us who are saved." You find them declaring that, being justified by faith, they have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

When the Lord Jesus Christ takes a man in hand to heal him, He makes a difference in his countenance, by which, of course, I do not mean the countenance of the *body* merely, but that countenance which David meant, that part of our nature which is visible to others. The Lord gives outward evidences of His inward work! And what sort of signs are those? He takes away from the countenance of our manhood the blotches of sin. I look into a man's spiritual face and I discover that he is a drunk, that he is a man of lust, that he is a man of anger, that he is a hard, cruel man, a mean, miserly man—these are so many blotches. And when the grace of God enters the heart, it takes away these disfigurements and beautifies the character! When the Lord Jesus begins to heal us, He removes from our countenance the blankness of despair. Did you ever see it? I have seen it in the actual bodily visage and a dreadful sight it is! But oh, when those charming bells are heard to ring, the bells of "free grace and dying love," and the man knows that his sin is forgiven and that he is accepted in Christ Jesus, then despair flies away! The shadow of the dragon's wing is taken from the face and the dove of peace passes by and casts a brightness as of silver upon the countenance! When the great Physician heals men, He removes the paleness of fear, for men are pale when they dread the wrath to come! And they tremble with fear, lest they die in their sins. Once pardoned that pallor is gone and the ruddiness of confidence comes back to the cheeks! The gloom of sorrow also goes from the man whom Christ makes whole—

"Why should I sorrow more?
I trust a Savior slain,
And safe beneath His sheltering cross,
Unmoved I shall remain."

And when the Lord goes on working the cures of grace, it is wonderful how He removes from the countenance the lines and furrows of need. The lantern jaws of hunger are seen in many who are pining after Christ and grace, and cannot find either. But when Christ comes, He satiates the soul and makes fat the bones—and the countenance of the heart is glad.

Let me tell you, though, I am afraid some Christians do not prove it, that the Lord Jesus smoothes out the wrinkles of care from the foreheads of His patients. When Christians are under the influence of divine grace, they know no care. They cast their care on Him who cares for them! They do the little they can do and leave the rest with their Lord, and all goes well, and their life is peace. O happy man who has been thus healed. "Well," says one, "I trust I am healed of sin, but I am not so healed as *that."* Brother, the good Physician is proceeding with His operations, and if you have not yet all the cure, it is your fault and not His, for it is in His power, if you trust Him, to take away sorrow, fear, despair, doubt, and even care—so that you shall say as our hymn puts it—

"All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,

And wait until the angels come
To bear me to their King."

It will not be long before they will come if you are in that condition! Only bad farmers leave their wheat out in the field too long, but my Lord never did so yet. Whenever His sheaves are ready for the garner, He is sure to reap them. A perfect man is on the threshold of heaven. When you are spiritually healthy and have undergone your spiritual quarantine, and there is no more sickness in you, do you think your Lord will keep you out of heaven? Not He, He is too desirous to have you with Him where He is!

The health which our Lord Jesus works in us is seen in the spiritual countenance in many ways. First, it makes the *eyes bright*. A man full of doubts and fears, or vexed with ambition or love of the world, has no bright transporting hopes. But the man who believes in Jesus has a hope that, when days and years are past, he shall be in heaven where Jesus is. I must confess that sometimes, when I try to realize that hope, my physical eyes grow dim because the tears begin to flow and almost blind me. Shall I, shall I *ever* see His face and cast a crown at His feet? I shall, I know I shall! But oh, it does seem too good to be true! While the physical eyes are thus dimmed, how bright the *spiritual* eyes become with such a hope to cheer them!

Spiritual health imparts a beauty to the entire visage. Think how the spouse describes her beauty. She says, "I am black"—she could not help saying that, for she was sunburned with exposure to the world—but she adds, "I am comely." Her Lord looked at her in such a way that she felt He could see her comeliness though she could not—

"Though in ourselves denied we are,
And black as Kedar's tents appear,
Yet, when we put Your beauty on,
Fair as the courts of Solomon."

There is no more beautiful object in the world to Christ than His own church! What a passage that is in the Song, where the king exclaims, "You are all fair, My love, there is no spot in you." He sees with eyes of love, indeed, who sees such beauty. Yet fair beyond conception will grace make the Christian! Altogether lovely will glory make the Christian! We shall bear neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, but be without fault before the throne of God.

What a difference grace makes to the spiritual *forehead* when it works with power. By nature, our forehead is as brass—hard, bold, presumptuous—but see what grace makes it. "Your temples are like a piece of pomegranate within your locks." Now, the pomegranate, when you open it, is red and white, and the Christian's brow is full of the blushes of a sacred shamefacedness. "Within your locks," says the Song, as though concealed with holy fear, but what you did see of her brow was red and white with blushing with bashfulness and holy love in the presence of her Lord. I pray that all of you who are converted in these days may know what holy shamefacedness means. Confidence in Christ is admirable, but not effrontery and self-confidence. I am afraid of those people who are so very sure, so very confident all of a sudden, and yet have nev-

er felt the burden of sin. Be ashamed and be confounded, while you lay hold on Christ, for the more He does for you, the less you must think of yourself. You may very accurately measure the reality of your grace by the reality of your self-loathing.

The Bridegroom also describes *the lips* of His Beloved, "Your lips are like a thread of scarlet and your speech is comely." Before her health returned, her lips were livid. Before she had received comfort, they were white with fear. But now, they wear a healthy redness and are lovely to her Lord. How about your lips, beloved friends? Are they praying lips, singing lips, confessing lips? Do you speak well of the Redeemer and rejoice whenever you tell what His love has done for you? Well is it with us when to our Lord our *"cheeks* are comely with rows of jewels, and our neck with chains of gold," while our whole countenance shines with holiness.

When God is our health, our whole countenance becomes bright. According to the words of the Song, "Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners." The believer's countenance becomes bright with clearness, as far as he, himself, is concerned—he is saved and he knows it! It becomes fair, as far as others are concerned, for they see the excellence of his character and wonder at it. And then it becomes dazzling to his adversaries, as the sun vanquishes rash gazers by its effulgence. Holiness is to opposers "terrible as an army with banners."

I desire that those of you who have been under the great Physician's hand of late may shine forth and proclaim the power of Jesus. Your Beloved cries, "Let Me see your face, for sweet is your face, and your countenance is comely." If Christ has cured you, why do you conceal His work? I feel inclined to do with you as the watchmen did with the spouse in the Song—"They smote me and took away my veil from me." I would not smite you severely, but I would gladly remove the veil from some of you—that you might be seen, that the church may see you—and the saints may rejoice in what the Savior has done for you. David says, "He is the health of my countenance." He does not say, "the health of my heart, merely"—"the health of my inward parts," though that is true, but "of my countenance." Therefore, if the Lord has done great things for you, proclaim it abroad, and make the streets of Jerusalem ring with grateful song!

IV. The last observation is this. THIS PASSAGE ENTITLES THE MOST SICK SOULS AMONG US TO HOPE. "Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance." Look at the source of spiritual health. If David had said, "I shall yet recover, for I have a splendid constitution. My stamina is such that it will throw off this sickness." Such boasting would not encourage you, would it? Because in your case, the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint, how could it? You have no stamina except for evil. The disease has smitten you to the very core and your heart has melted like wax. Then, bless God that your healing does not depend on any constitutional strength in yourself!

Next, notice David does not expect healing from anything he can do. He did not say, "Certain actions of mine will yet recover me of my disease." Not at all. If it were so, you, my friend, would be in despair, for you cannot do anything! What good work can you do? Why, you have smutty fingers, and if you were to try and produce a piece of fair white linen you would blacken it in the weaving of it! You cannot achieve your own salvation, nor need you do it. The health of David's countenance lay where yours must lie, not in *your* works or merit, but in the salvation of God!

And mark, he does not speak of undergoing a long process. "I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance." Here is nothing about waiting, tarrying, lingering, and loitering, as some preachers seem to make out. No, David understood, as I trust we understand, the doctrine of, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ receives, by that look of faith, the principle of health which will begin at once to work—and will ultimately cast out all spiritual disease. Blessed is it to know that our hope lies in God and not in ourselves!

I want you, just for a moment, especially you who wish to be healed, to think who He is, and what there is in Him which you have to look to as your spiritual health. Sin is your disease and here is *mercy without limit* to meet it. You have done evil in all ways and what is worse, your very nature is evil! But here is God who delights to forgive, infinitely gracious, finding a happiness in passing by transgression and sin—look to Him, then! Here shall all your sins be drowned, for God's love in Christ Jesus is a sea without a bottom, and without a shore. Here is assured healing for your sickness, for infinite mercy cannot be baffled in its design.

Again here is *infinite atonement,* also. God is not only willing to pardon, but He can do it consistently with justice, for His own dear Son has bled and died. When I turn my eyes to the Son of God bleeding upon the cross, so glorious is His sacrifice in my eyes that I conclude that, if there were ten thousand, thousand worlds full of sinners, there must be merit enough in the death of Christ to save them all if God had so willed it! We cannot conceive any boundary to the merit of the dying Son of God. Incarnate Deity smarts beneath the lash of justice, is pierced to the heart, is slain, is laid for three days in the grave! Why, there must be a splendor of power about that majestic sacrifice, illimitable, inconceivable! Come, soul, if this is your healing, no disease can stand against it! Infinite mercy armed with an infinite atonement can accomplish all things! O God, You are, indeed, the health of my countenance! By You, I am brought back from my death in sin.

Then, remember that *divine energy* is ready to work our healing, and omnipotence works all things. "Can these dry bones live?" said one of old, but live they did! The dead have been raised and even at this hour, things impossible with men are possible with God! The Eternal Spirit waits to work His miracles of love even now. No propensity of depraved nature is too strong for the Almighty. Man, have you a lion of anger within you? This Samson can tear that lion as though it were a kid! Have you

a host of evil passions within you, and fears strong like the Midianites of old? Behold, this sacred torrent of divine love, mightier than Kishon of old, can sweep them all away! Has Satan, himself, entered you and brought a legion of devils with him? Has hell vomited forth all its spawn to hold a horrid carnival in your nature? There was one out of whom Jesus cast seven devils—no, another out of whom He drove a legion! Come to Jesus, man, for devils *still* tremble at His power! Jesus can chase away the enemy from you. All God's energy waits to heal you. "Seek Him that makes the seven stars and Orion, and turns the shadow of death into the morning, that calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the earth; the Lord is His name," for nothing can stand against the mighty arm of His irresistible grace.

To complete this I must add there is, in God, who is the health of our countenance, *immutable love*. If God begins to heal you, He will never give up the work till He has achieved it. There is not recorded in the life of Christ a solitary half cure. I read of none into whom the devils returned after Jesus drove them out, nor of any lepers who had the leprosy again. I have not to preach to you a salvation that can be lost and dependent upon your good behavior! Lo, I preach a pardon never to be reversed, acceptance in the Beloved never to be cancelled, adoption which makes you sons forever! Give yourselves up to Jesus and He will give you garments of mercy that will never wear out, treasures of love which neither moth nor rust shall consume, and health which will introduce you into a city in which the inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick," for the people that dwell therein have been forgiven their iniquity.

Healing by God, Himself, presents a ground of hope to the worst among us and blessed be God, many of us have realized it as David did! Now if we, as honest men, tell you that God in Christ Jesus is the health of our countenance, we trust you will believe us and that you will seek the Lord for yourselves. The healing which God gives in Jesus Christ is available to every sin-sick soul. Whoever you may be, if you are sick, today, God is able and willing to heal you through Jesus Christ His Son! I pray you, linger not through any fear of His ability or His willingness, but come and welcome, come and welcome! Come right now!

It is of no use my preaching about healing to those who are not sick. Jesus came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. But to those who are sick this will be a gladsome message! I would like to put it in such an unmistakable shape that they *must* comprehend it, the Holy Spirit instructing them. You have a deadly disease in your nature, every one of you. In some of you, it has taken a very hideous form, but the disease is at the heart of every one of you, ladies and gentlemen, even the same which festers in the bosom of the harlot and the thief. True, it has come out differently in them. Circumstances have helped to bring it out. Perhaps if you had been in their circumstances, it might have been as foully developed as in them. Now, if today you feel the terrible ravages of this disease, I am glad of it, for it is a hopeful sign. When the high priest examined men who were suspected of being lepers, I can suppose that one would say, "I have a very bad spot on my forehead, but there is just

near my breast a piece of clean flesh where there are no white scales. I am right at heart, though bad elsewhere." "Ah!" the priest would say, "You are unclean and I must put you away." Another would say, "It is true I have a whiteness on my lips, but if you examine me, you will find half my body quite free from the disease," "Ah, I must shut you out of the camp," said the priest. But last of all, there came one who said tremblingly to the priest, "I am leprous altogether, I cannot point to a spot as big as a pin's head that is clean. I am a leper from the soles of my feet to the crown of my head." The priest would put his hands on that man and say, "You are clean." How astonished he must have been!

Be you also astonished, O despairing soul! If you are a sinner and nothing but a sinner, condemned, lost, ruined—and you will admit it and look to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation—you are clean every whit! Whenever we are brought to perfect soul poverty and absolute bankruptcy of spirit so that we turn our purses inside out, and cannot find one rusty farthing left, then Christ and all the treasures of His grace are ours! Oh to be brought down to the lowest depth of self-despair, for that is the door of hope! While your cup is half full, Christ will not pour His wine into it. Now bring your cups and say, "Lord, there is a little good at the bottom, does not that recommend me?" No, no, no! He will never pour in the new wine of the kingdom until you are turned bottom upwards and wiped out as a man wipes a dish! But when you are quite emptied, then He will pour in the stream of His love until it brims the vessel of your nature! The Lord make you to feel sick, even unto death, and then you will find Jesus to be the resurrection and the life.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Psalm 42 and Jeremiah 30:4-17.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—908, 715, 103.

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SPIRITUAL APPETITE
NO. 1227

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 4, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The full soul loathes the honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet."
Proverbs 27:7.

IT is a great blessing when food and appetite meet together. Some have appetite and no meat, they need our pity. Others have meat but no appetite. They may not, perhaps, win our pity but they certainly require it. We have heard of a gentleman who was accustomed to take an early morning walk and frequently met a poor man hastening to his labor. One morning he said to him, "I have to walk this early each morning to get a stomach for my meat." "Ah," said the other, "and I have to trudge to work this early to get meat for my stomach." Neither of them was quite satisfied with his position—the happy conjunction of the appetite and the food could alone secure content. Are we thankful enough when we have both?

It has often happened that men have been so luxuriously fed that appetite has departed from them altogether. The Israelites, when they were in the wilderness, became at last so squeamish that though they were fed with the bread from heaven, and for once men did *eat* angels' food, yet they said, "Our soul loathes this light bread." And thousands in the world are in great danger of falling into the same condition, for the rarest luxuries are unenjoyed by them. They pick and choose as if nothing were good enough for them, and like the old Roman gluttons, they require sea and land, earth and air to be ransacked for their gratification, and then crave pungent sauces and strange flavorings before they can eat. The fact is, the old proverb is true, that the best sauce for meat is hunger, and while the confectioner and the cook may labor with a thousand arts to produce a dainty dish, nature teaches us the way to enjoy our meat, namely, not to eat it till we want it, and then to partake of only so much as our bodies require. That hunger gives a relish even to objectionable diet is certain. Our forefathers found it possible to live upon food which we could not touch. Even so late as the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the mass of the poor seldom tasted wheat bread, but fed on rye or barley cakes, and often had to be content with bread made of beans, peas, tares, oats, or lentils, and even these had to be frequently mixed with acorns. They had a saying that, "Hunger sets his foot in the horse's manger," meaning that food which was only fit for horses was devoured by men in the time of famine. Those delicate people, who are forever complaining of this and that, and regretting the "good old times," would change their tune if they had a trial of such fare, and would earnestly pray to be projected, again, into the times in which we live.

The rules which apply to the bodily appetite equally hold true of the mind. We easily lose our taste for anything of which we have our fill. Many men of the world have gone the round of amusement, and now nothing can please them. They have worn out all their playthings and are tired of every game. Poor things, more wearied of their follies than the slave by his servitude. For them laughter and mirth have become ghastly mockeries, men singers and women singers are no delight, and instruments of music are discordant. Gardens and palaces are dreary and treasures of art a vexation of spirit. By the road of folly they have reached the very point to which Solomon came with all his wisdom and like him they cry, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

In a higher order of things the same process can be observed. In the pursuit of knowledge men may come to loathe honeycombs through sheer repletion. Many a literary man has reached such a condition of thoroughness that the books which he can enjoy are as few as the fingers of his hands. With a toss of the head, he passes by volumes with which ordinary readers are charmed. His delicate poetical taste is shocked by the hymns which delight his countrymen and his ears are tortured by the tunes to which they are sung. For my part, I would sooner retain the power of enjoying a simple hymn, sung to a tune which delights the multitude, than find myself proclaimed king of critics. And I would sooner be able to sit down and read a child's storybook with interest, than rise into the sublime condition of those literary gentlemen who glance over every book with a sharp critical eye and see nothing meriting their attention. In fact, they never will see anything worth reading, unless the book is written by themselves or one of their party. "The full soul loathes the honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet."

I would not have said so much upon this principle of our nature if it had not happened to enter into religion. It is upon religious thoroughness that I have to speak this morning. Men, in the things of God, have not always an appetite for the sweetest and most precious truth. The gospel of Jesus, revealed from heaven, is full of marrow and fatness, but the condition of men's minds is such that they cannot perceive its excellence, but regard it as a tasteless thing at best, while some even treat it as though it were wormwood and gall to them. They feed upon the husks of the world with greedy relish, but turn from the provisions of mercy with disdain. They are full of the meat from the flesh pots of Egypt, and for the bread of heaven they have no desire, nor will they, till the Holy Spirit quickens them into spiritual life, and makes them feel the keen pangs of spiritual hunger.

The three points of my discourse will be as follows—first, that *Jesus Christ is, in Himself, sweeter than the honeycomb.* Secondly, *there are those that loathe even Him.* And then, thirdly, blessed be His name, *there are others who appreciate Him*—"To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet."

I. Let us begin, then, with the assured truth that JESUS CHRIST IS, HIMSELF, SWEETER THAN THE HONEYCOMB. Whether you believe it,

or not, the fact remains, the incarnate word is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. Whether it is your privilege to revel in the delightful knowledge of His love or not, that love will still be equally precious. That Jesus Christ is sweeter than the honeycomb is clear, if we consider who He is and what He gives and does. If you think of it, you will see that *it must be so*. Our Lord is the incarnation of divine love. The love of God is sweet, and Jesus is that love made manifest. "God so loved the world"—I pause to ask how much? Where shall we see at a glance the fullness of that love? Turn your eyes to Jesus, He alone answers the question. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." There, bleeding upon Calvary, we see the heart of the Father revealed in the pierced heart of His only-begotten Son. Jesus is the focus of the love of God. The boundless goodness of the ever-loving God finds its best expression in the person of the Redeemer—surely, then, He must be sweet beyond compare. When God takes His love, and culls the choicest flower from it, and hands it down to earth for men to gaze upon it as the token of His favor, we may be sure that its fragrance surpasses conception. God is love, and when that love is concentrated in one individual that it may afterwards be diffused through multitudes, there must be an infinite sweetness in that blessed person. Judge you what I say—must it not be so?

Moreover, Jesus Christ is, in Himself, the embodiment of boundless mercy to sinners as well as love to creatures. God loved men, for He had made them, but He could not bless them, for He must judge them for their offenses. Lo, Jesus Christ has vindicated the divine honor, satisfied the law, and now the mercy of God can descend freely to men, even to the rebellious and the undeserving. Who would find mercy, let him look where Jesus died upon the tree, and he shall find it blooming freely from the crimsoned ground. Who would behold mercy in all its plenitude, let him go where Jesus stands with open hands welcoming the vilest of the vile to the feast of love, cleansing their every stain and robing them in garments of salvation. He must be sweet from whom such sweetness flows that He makes the foulest and most offensive of mankind acceptable to God. If His merits turn our hell to heaven, our gall of bitterness into joy and peace, it is not possible that even the honeycomb dripping with virgin honey should fitly set Him forth. You bees that wander over fairest flowers, your choicest gatherings can never rival the quintessences of delight which must dwell in one in whom the mercy of God is concentrated.

You poverty-stricken sons of men, Christ must be sweet, for He meets all your wants. Sweet is liberty to the captive and when the Son makes you free, you are free, indeed. Sweet is pardon to the condemned and Jesus proclaims full forgiveness and salvation. Sweet is health to the sick and Jesus is the great physician of souls. Sweet is light to those who are in darkness and to eyes that are dim, and Jesus is both sun to our darkness and eyes to our blindness. All that men can want, all that the most

famished souls can pine after, is to be found in the person and work of the Lord Jesus, and therefore, sweet He must be.

He is sweet because, whenever He comes into a man's heart, He breathes into it the sweetness of abounding peace. Oh, the *rest* our souls have known when we have leaned upon His bosom! "The peace of God which passes all understanding" has kept our heart and mind by Jesus Christ. Our soul has drank nectar from His wounds. Nor has it been bare peace alone, the glassy pools of rest have bubbled up into fountains of joy. In Jesus, we have rejoiced and do rejoice and will rejoice all day. No happiness can be more divine than the bliss of knowing Him and feeding upon Him and being one with Him. All the true peace and joy that are known on earth—I might have said that are known in heaven among the ransomed throng—all come through Jesus Christ our Lord, whose name is the sum of delights. Those spices must be sweet, indeed, from which the sacred oil of joy distills. That honey must be infinitely sweet of which one single drop fills a whole life with rejoicing.

It is clear that sweet our Lord must be because His very name smells of celestial hope to believers. No sooner do we taste of Jesus, than, like Jonathan in the wood, our eyes are enlightened and we see the invisible. The veil is taken away and we behold a way of access to our Father God and to the joys of His right hand. Once understand that Jesus has borne our sins and carried our sorrows, and we see that the felicities of eternity are prepared for us. His name is the *open sesame* of the gates of Paradise. Learn but to pronounce the name of Jesus from your heart as all your confidence, and you have learned a magic word which will scatter troops of opposing foes and will open the two-leaved gates, and cut the bars of iron in sunder if they stand between your soul and heaven. Since Jesus is all this, and vastly more than any human tongue can tell, it is clear upon the very face of it that He must be sweet.

But we are not left to the supposition and inference that it must be so, we *know it is so*. Our Lord is as the honeycomb, for He is sweet to God, Himself. The taste of the High and Holy One, who shall venture to judge? What the Lord Himself calls sweet must be sweet indeed. Now, the very smell of Christ's sacrifice, no, I will go further—the very smell of that which was the type of Christ in the days of Noah—was so pleasing to God that it is written, "The Lord smelled a sweet savor of rest, and He said, 'I will no more destroy the earth with a flood.'" If the very smell of that which was but the emblem of the bleeding Lamb was grateful to Jehovah, how sweet to the divine Father must the Lord Jesus Himself be in His actual sacrifice?

Why, the very sight of the blood—and, mark you, not the blood of Christ, but only the blood of a lamb slain in type of Christ—the very sight of that blood sprinkled on the lintel turned away the destroying angel from Israel of old, for the Lord said, "When I see the blood I will pass over you." Now, if a mere glimpse of the type of Jesus' atoning blood is so satisfactory to the heart of God, think what the sight of Jesus must be, for He has been obedient to death, even the death of the cross. If I had time,

I might mention the many ways in which our Lord is set forth in Scripture as being sweet to the Father—all the senses are represented as being gratified—the Lord *hears* His voice crying from the ground and answers it with blessing. He tastes His sacrifice as wine which makes glad the heart of God, and He feels His touch as the Daysman laying His hands both upon judge and offender. In every possible way, Jesus is most sweet and pleasant to the divine mind. Hear how from the highest heaven the Lord declares, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake. Now, if the heart of Deity itself is satisfied and filled to the full with content, there must be an infinite sweetness in the person of the Lord Jesus. That honeycomb must be sweet with which the Triune God is satisfied.

Moreover, our Lord Jesus is sweet to the angels in heaven. Did they not watch Him when He was here below with careful eyes? When first they missed Him from the courts above, they flew with eager haste to discover where He was, and when they found that He was come to this poor planet, they made the night bright with their radiance and sweet with their chorales. While He tarried here, they watched His footsteps, they ministered to Him in the wilderness, and in the garden, and at other times, they waited in their legions, eager to deliver Him if He would but have beckoned them to use their celestial weapons. When they saw Him at last, ready to ascend, I can well believe that the poet's words are no fiction, but describe a fact—

"They brought His chariot from on high
To bear Him to His throne;
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
'The glorious work is done.'"

He was "seen of angels," and was very dear and precious to them. Surely He who attracts all those bright intelligences, and causes them to gaze upon Him unceasingly, and pay Him divine honors must be sweet indeed.

Sweet is Christ, beloved, for it is His presence that makes heaven what it is. You are in a garden and smelling a dainty fragrance. You say to yourself, "Where does this come from?" You traverse the walks and borders to discover the source of the pleasant odor and at last, you come upon a rose. Even thus, if you were to walk among those fruitful trees which skirt the river of the water of life, you would perceive a peerless perfume of superlative delight, but you would not have to ask yourself, "Where does this fragrance come from?" There is but one rose in the Paradise of God which is capable of scattering such perfume of joy, and that is the "Rose of Sharon," that famous, "plant of renown," which has diffused fragrance over both earth and heaven. Well may He be sweet to us, since when He was broken like the alabaster box of precious ointment, He filled all the chambers of the house of God both above and below with an unrivalled sweetness.

If you want proof from nearer home, let me remind you how sweet the Well-Beloved is to His own people. What was it that first attracted us to God? Was it not the sweetness of Christ? What was it that banished all

the bitterness of our fears? Was it not the sweetness of His pardoning love? What is it that holds us so that we cannot go, which enchains us, seals us, nails us to the cross so that we can never leave it? Is it not that He is so sweet that we shall never find any to compare with Him? Yes, and therefore we must abide with Him because there is nowhere else to go. Brethren and sisters, I appeal to you who know Jesus, are you not satisfied? I mean not only satisfied with Him, but satisfied altogether? Does He not fill and overfill your souls? When you enjoy His presence, what other joy could you imagine? When He embraces you, have you any heart left for other delights? Do you not say, "He is all my salvation, and all my desire." My cup runs over, my Lord Jesus, when I have communion with You—

"Jesus, to whom I fly,
Does all my wishes fill.
What, though the creature streams are dry,
I have a fountain still."

All the saints will tell you that Christ is most sweet and altogether lovely. And some of them will confess that sometimes His sweetness overcomes them, carries them right away, and bears them out of themselves. The eagle wings of Jesus' love uplift us to the gates of heaven, and this will happen to us even when there is nothing on earth to make us happy, and all without and within is dark. When the poor body is full of pain, and every nerve is unstrung by disease, even then Jesus comes and lays His fingers amid the strings of our poor nature, until charmed by His touch, they pour forth a music which might teach the harps of heaven His praise. In His presence our heart is glad beyond all gladness. We are beatified if not glorified. Would God it might be always so. My dear Lord and Master is very sweet, but my lips fail me and I blush at my poor attempts to speak His praises.

One thing that proves how sweet He is, is this—He removes all bitterness from the heart which truly receives Him. The quassia cup of sickness is no longer bitter when a drop of His love falls into it. In His society, sick beds grow into thrones in which the invalid does not so much pine as reign. The lonely chamber becomes a royal reception room. The hard bed a couch of down and the curtains are transformed into banners of love. So, too, His love digs out of the garden of life the roots of the regret of care and the wormwood of anxiety. A man may be vexed with a thousand anxieties, but in communion with Christ he will find rest unto his soul. The delectable mixture of fellowship with Jesus effectually drowns the taste of the world's bitterness. Saints in persecution have found the love of Christ cleanse their mouths from every taste of hatred's gall. They have been able to bear imprisonment and think it liberty, to regard chains as ornaments, to find the rack a bed of roses, and the blazing stake a chariot of fire to bear them to their reward. If a child of God were called in the pursuit of duty to swim through a sea of hell's most bitter pains, yet with the sweetness of Christ's love in his mouth, he would not so much as taste the sea of gall. As to death, we have learned to swallow it up in victory. Surely its bitterness is past. Where else find

you such delicious dainties? Where else such all-subduing sweetness? Jesus is bliss itself.

Thus have I shown sufficiently that facts have proven that Jesus is sweet as the honeycomb, but I detain you just a moment to notice that *He is incomparably so*. Honey, I might almost say, is not only sweet, but sweetness itself. Whether I am right or not in speaking thus of honey, I shall be right enough in saying it of Jesus Christ—He is not only sweet, but sweetness itself. We need not say of Him that He is good, for He is essential goodness. He is not only loving, but love. Whatever good thing you may seek in the world, you shall find it thinly spread here and there upon good men, as God deals out these precious things by measure. But the fullness of all good you shall find in Jesus Christ. He is not the sweet odor, but the ointment which gives it forth. He is not the brook, but the fountain from which it springs. He is not the beam of light, but the sun from which it proceeds. Honey is the conglomeration and compounding of a thousand sweets. The bees visit all sorts of flowers, knowing by a cunning wisdom denied to us, where all sweet things are hidden—they take not only the nectar of the ruddy rose, but also of the snow-white lily—and gathering ambrosia from all the beauties of the garden, they thus concoct a luscious sweetness altogether unsurpassable. Even thus my Lord is all excellences compounded and commingled in divine harmony—a rare confection of all perfections to make one perfection—the meeting of all sweetnesses to make one perfect sweet. They said of Henry the Eighth that, if all the features of a tyrant had been lost, they might have been painted afresh from his life. And surely we may say of Christ that, if all the sweetness and light of manhood had been forgotten, if all the love of mothers, the constancy of martyrs, the honesty of confessors, and the self-sacrifice of heroes had departed, you would find it all treasured up in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Each bee, as he performs his many journeys, selects what he thinks best and brings it to the common store. And I doubt not they have each a dainty tooth so that each one chooses the best he finds. Oh, you preachers of the gospel, you may each seek out the richest thoughts and words you can, to proclaim my Lord. Oh, you who are the mighty orators of the church, you may utter the choicest language of poetry or prose, and so you may bring all sweets together, but you shall never match the altogether peerless sweetness which dwells in the person and work of Jesus the well-beloved.

Honey is a healthy sweet, though many sweets are not so. Children have been made sick and even poisoned by berries whose sickly sweetness has decoyed them to their hurt. But as for our Lord, the more you feed on Him the more you may. Christ is health to the soul, yes, strength and life. Eat, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved. Have you found honey? Eat not too much, but have you found Jesus? Eat to the full, and eat on still, if so you can, for you shall never have too much of Him.

II. Secondly—THERE ARE THOSE WHO LOATHE THE SWEETNESS OF OUR LORD. This shows itself variously. Some loathe Him so as to

trample on Him, and this I find to be the translation given in the margin, "The full soul tramples on a honeycomb." God have mercy upon these boastful ones who persecute His saints, revile His name, and despise His gospel. If there are any such here, may sovereign mercy change their hearts, or a fearful judgement awaits them.

Others show that they loathe Christ because they are always murmuring at Him. If they do not find fault with the gospel itself, they rail at its ministers. Nobody can please them. John comes neither eating nor drinking, and they say he has a devil. The Master comes eating and drinking and they say—behold a man gluttonous and a wine bibber. One man preaches very solemnly and they call him heavy; another mingles humor with his discourse and they accuse him of frivolity. One minister uses a lofty rhetoric, he is too flowery. Another speaks in simpler style, he is vulgar. This generation, like the generations which have gone before, cannot be satisfied—but it is *Jesus* they are discontented with. O you carping critics of the gospel, you find fault with the dish, but it is a mere excuse—you do not like the meat. If you hungered after the meat you would not object to the platter on which it is served. But because you love it not, you complain of the dish and the carver.

Often this loathing is shown by an utter indifference to the gospel. The great mass of our fellow citizens will not attend a place of worship at all, or if they do attend, it is but seldom. And when they come, they leave their hearts behind them, so that the word goes in one ear and out the other. The suffering Savior is nothing to them. Heaven and hell are nothing to them. Whether they shall be lost or saved is nothing to them. Thus they show their loathing.

Perhaps some here present loathe our Lord at bottom and yet think not so. They attend to His word, but what is the attention? They care for Jesus, but they care so little that it leads to no practical *result*. Some of you, after 10 years of hearing the gospel, are still unconverted. And after 20 years of the enjoyment of gospel privileges, you still have never tasted the honey of the word of God. If you thought it sweet, you would have tasted of it before now—you loathe it or else you would not let it stand right under your nose untasted for years. You must be full, or you would not allow this honeycomb to lie untouched so long. You have meant to eat of it, you say. Yes, but I never knew a hungry man to sit without eating for six hours at a table meaning to eat all the while. No, he lays to as soon as grace has been said, and in your case, the grace has been said a great many times—and yet you sit with the sweets of mercy before you and refuse to eat thereof. I cannot account for it on any other theory but that there is a secret loathing in your soul.

This loathing is manifest by many signs. There is the Bible, a book of infinite sweetness, God's letter of love to the sons of men. Is it not dreadfully dry reading! A three-volume novel suits a great many far better. That is loathing the honeycomb. There is the gospel ministry. Sermons are dull affairs, are they not? Now, I will admit that some sermons are dreary and empty as a desert, but when Christ be honestly and earnestly

preached, how is it you are so weary? Others are fed, why do you complain? The meat is right enough, but you have no appetite for it—for the reason given in the text. When a man loathes Christ, he finds prayer to be bondage and if he carries it on at all, it is a very dull exercise, yielding no enjoyment. As to meditation, that is a thing neglected altogether by the godless many. Sunday, with some persons, is a very weary day—they are glad when it is over. I heard one say the other day he thought Sunday ought to be spent in recreation. Upon which a friend replied that he wished he might find true re-creation, for he needed to be created anew in Christ Jesus—and then he would judge the Sabbath to be the best day of the week. Alas, these dull Sabbaths and these dreary preachers. And this dull praying and singing. And all this weariness—they are sure signs that you are full souls—and therefore loathe the honeycomb.

This loathing comes of a soul's being full—and souls may be full in a great many ways. Some are full because they have never yet discovered their natural depravity and nothingness. They have never realized that they are condemned by the law of God. These full souls who are what they always were—good people as they have always been from their birth—do not want a Savior and therefore, they despise Him. Why should the whole value a physician? Is he not intended for the sick? Alas for you full ones, for your time of hunger will come when there will be no more feasts of love, and then, as Dives could not obtain a drop of water, you, also, will be denied a crumb of consolation.

Some people are full with enjoying the world. They have wealth and they are perfectly content with it. Or they have no wealth, but still they are pleased with the groveling pursuits of their class. Their thoughts never rise. They are like the rooster on the dunghill that scratched up a diamond and said, "I would sooner have found a grain of barley." They are satisfied if they have enough to eat and drink and wear—but they think not of divine things. They are full of the world, and therefore loathe the honeycomb.

Some are full of confidence in outward religiousness. They were christened when they were babes and they were confirmed—and if that doesn't save people, what will? A bishop's hands laid on you! Think of that!! Since that they have taken the sacrament and they have always been told that if you go regularly to your place of worship, and especially if you pay 20 shillings in the pound, you will do very well—at least if *you* do not, what will become of your neighbors? These full souls do not appreciate free grace and dying love—salvation by the blood of Christ seems to them to be but idle babble.

Some are full of self-conceit—they know everything—they are great readers and profound philosophers. Their thoughts have dived to the bottom of infinity. They are so nice in their criticisms that they—

"Can a hair divide
Between the west and north-west side."

It is not possible to satisfy them. The knowledge of Christ crucified is foolishness and a stumbling block to them. Others are full of the pride of rank. Yes, they are very glad to hear that the poor people hear the gos-

pel—and they have no doubt that the plain preaching of the gospel is very useful to the lower orders—but respectable people who live in the West End and ride in carriages do not require such preaching. They are too respectable to need saving and so their full souls loathe the honeycomb.

But we need not stop any longer talking about *them*, for we shall do them no good as long as they are full. If the angel Gabriel were to preach Christ to them, it would be as a sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal. Serve up the meat as well as you may, but never will it be appreciated till the guest has an appetite. The Lord send them an appetite by the work of His Holy Spirit!

III. And so I close with the third point, which is this—THERE ARE SOME WHO DO APPRECIATE THE SWEETNESS OF CHRIST. I would to God I could find such out this morning. Hungry souls, we are brethren, if you are hungry after pardon, mercy and grace. I remember when I was in your condition. What would you give to have Christ? "I would give my eyes," says one. Give Him your eyes, then, by looking to Him, and you shall have Him. "What I would give," says one, "to be delivered from my besetting sin! I hunger after holiness." Soul, you may have deliverance from besetting sins and have it for nothing. Jesus Christ has come into the world to save His people from their sins. Looking to Him, He will deliver you from that disease which now makes you love sin. And He will give you a taste for holiness and a principle of holiness by the Holy Spirit and you shall, from now on, become a saint unto God. He turns lions into lambs and ravens into doves. Nothing is impossible with Him. You have but to trust your soul with Him and you shall have pardon, peace, holiness, heaven, God, everything.

Those who hunger are those, then, who know the sweetness of Christ. But they must do more than that—being hungry, *they must feed*—though the text does not say so, it is very clear that merely being hungry does not make meat sweet. It is only sweet when you *eat* it. If meat were placed where we could not reach it, and we were hungry, we should be inclined to think it bitter, after the model of the fox and the grapes in the fable. If there were a Savior, but we could not reach Him, it would make our life still more miserable. Poor soul, if you want Christ, receive Him. It is all you have to do. The bread is before you, eat it. The fitness which is needed for eating is an *appetite*—you have it—lay to, then, by holy faith. Receive Christ into yourself and He will be sweet, indeed, to you.

The text says that the hungry man's appetite makes even bitter things sweet. Is there anything bitter in Christ? Yes, there was much in Him that was bitter to Himself, and that is the very sweetest part to us. Those pangs and griefs of His, and unutterable woes, and bloody death, how bitter! The wormwood and the gall were His. But to our believing soul these bitter things are honeycombs. Christ is best loved when we view Him as crucified for us.

There are other bitters with Christ. We must repent of sin, and to carnal minds it is a bitter thing to hate sin and leave it. But to those who

hunger after Christ, repentance is one of the daintiest of divine graces. Christ requires of His people self-denial and self-sacrifice—unrenewed nature nauseates these things—but souls eager after Jesus are glad to deny themselves, glad to give of their substance, glad, even, to suffer hardships for His dear sake—even bitter things for Him are sweet.

There are doctrines, also, which are very distasteful to carnal minds. They cannot agree with them—they are angry when they are preached—even as those who left our Lord when He said, "Except you eat My flesh and drink My blood, there is no life in you." Those who hunger after Christ prize the doctrines of grace—only let them know what Jesus teaches and every syllable is, at once, acceptable to their minds.

It may be there are ordinances which you shrink from. You have felt baptism especially to be a cross, but when your soul fully knows the sweetness of Christ, and your mind perceives that it is His ordinance, you feel at once that the bitter thing is sweet to you for His dear sake. Possibly you may have to suffer some measure of persecution and be despised and nicknamed for Jesus' sake. Thank God they cannot imprison you and put you to death, but even if they could, if you have an appetite for Christ, you will eat the bitter herbs as well as the Paschal Lamb—and think that they go well together. Christ and His cross—you will give your love to both and shoulder the cross right bravely and find it a sweet thing to be despised for the love of Jesus Christ your Lord.

Have but an appetite for Christ and the little prayer meeting, though there be but few poor people at it, will be sweet to you. That poor broken-down preaching, which is the best that the minister is able to give, will become sweet to you because there is a savor of Christ in it. If you can only get a leaf torn out of the Bible, or half a leaf, it will be precious to you. Even to hear a child sing a hymn about Christ will be pleasant. You remember Dr. Guthrie, when dying, asking his friend to sing him "a bairn's hymn"? He needed a child's hymn then. A simple little ditty about Christ was what the grand old man desired in his departing moments. And when your soul hungers after Jesus Christ, you will love simple things if they speak of Him. You will not be so dainty as some of you are. You must have a comfortable cushion to sit upon. When *you* are hungry, you are glad to stand in the aisles. Full souls need have a very superior preacher. They say of the most successful evangelist, there is nothing in him, he only tells a lot of anecdotes. But when you are hungry, you will rejoice that the man preaches Christ and the faults will vanish. I remember my father telling me, when I was a boy, and did not like my breakfast, that he thought it would do me good to be sent to the Union House for a month and see if I did not get an appetite. Many Christians need to be sent under the law a little while—Moses would cure them of squeamishness so that when they came back to Jesus and His love, they would have a zest for the gospel.

The lesson from all this is—*pray for a good appetite for Christ*—and when you have it, *keep it*. Do not spoil it with the unsatisfying dainties of the world, or by sucking down modern notions and skeptical philoso-

phies—those gingerbreads and unhealthy sweetmeats so much cried up nowadays. Do not waste a good appetite upon anything less sweet than the true honeycomb. When you have got that appetite for Christ, *indulge it*. Do not be afraid, at any time, of having too much of Christ. Some of our brethren seem alarmed lest they should grow perfect against their wills. Dear brothers and sisters, go into that river as far as you please—there is no likelihood of your being drowned. You will never have too much grace, or peace, or faith, or consecration. Go in for the whole thing. Indulge your appetite to the very full. We cannot say it to our children with honey before them, but we may say it to God's children with Christ before them—"Eat, yes, eat abundantly."

Pray the Lord to give other people appetites. It is a grand thing to hear of ten and twenty thousand rushing to hear the gospel. I hope it is because they are hungering for it. When the Lord gives the people the appetite, I am certain He will find them the meat, for it is always true, in God's family, that whenever He sends a mouth, He always sends meat for it, and if any one of you has a mouth for Christ this morning, come to Him and be filled to the full.

While you pray to God to give others an appetite, *try and create it*. How can you create it? Many an appetite has been created in the streets among poor starving wretches by their passing the place where provision is prepared—the very smell of it has made their mouths water. Tell sinners how happy you are. Tell sinners what Christ has done for you. Tell them how He has pardoned you, how He has renewed your nature. Tell them about your glorious hope, tell them how saints can live and die triumphant in Christ and you will set their mouths a-watering. That is half the battle—when once they have an appetite, they are sure to have the meat. May the Lord the Holy Spirit send that appetite to sinners throughout the whole of London. And to Jesus Christ, who satisfies all comers, shall be glory forever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Peter 1.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—907, 436, 559.

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SALVATION BY FAITH AND THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT
NO. 1228

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 11, 1875, *BY C. H. SPURGEON,* AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" Galatians 5:5.

IT may seem remarkable that Paul, who was once the strictest of Pharisees, should become the most ardent champion of the doctrines of salvation by grace and justification by faith. How large a portion of the New Testament is given up to his writings—and the most prominent subject in all that falls from his pen is righteousness by faith. Did not the Lord show great wisdom in selecting as the chief advocate of this truth a man who knew the other side—who had worked diligently under the law, who had practiced every ceremony, who was a Hebrew of the Hebrews—and had profited above many under the Jews' religion, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the fathers? Paul would know, right well, the bondage of the old system, and having felt its iron enter into his soul, he would more highly prize the liberty with which Christ makes men free. He was also a man of great learning—he was at home in every part of the Old Testament and consequently, the quotations which he makes from it are almost innumerable. He also understood the Rabbinical method of spiritualizing and used it against his old associates, turning the Old Testament allegories into a battery in defense of New Testament principles. He knew how to take the story, as we have seen, of Hagar and Sarah, and to find in it an argument for the doctrine which he desired to defend. It was well that a man who had been, in spirit, a Pharisee and in education equal to the most learned of the Jewish doctors, should be engaged by the Spirit of God to defend the glorious principles of salvation by grace. Moreover, Paul was a man of very powerful mind. Has the Christian church ever had in her midst a man whose arguments are so keen, so subtle, so profound and yet so clear? He dives to the very bottom of things, but he never darkens counsel by mysticism. Like the eagle, he soared aloft and his piercing eyes did not fail him as he gazed on the sun. He was amazed by the revelations he beheld, but he was not dazzled and perplexed. He spoke some things hard to be understood, which the foolish have wrested to their destruction, but they had to do his teaching great violence before they could thus pervert it. His intimate acquaintance with divine things and the logical conformation of his mind, combined with an immovable decision of character and a flaming ardor of soul, made him, in the hands of God, the fittest conceivable instrument

for the divine purpose. He was wisely chosen and set for the defense of the gospel.

But why, my brethren, such care in selecting an advocate whose previous education and formation of mind so well enabled him to do battle for the cause? Why was the choice so carefully made? Why such a display of divine wisdom? I reply, because this is the point which, above all others has been, is, and always will be most assailed by the enemies of our holy religion. Justification by faith is the Thermopylae of Christianity. It is there that the battle must be decided by hand-to-hand fight. If that narrow pass is once carried by the enemy, then the whole of our bulwarks may be stormed. But as long as that fort is held fast, the rest of the truths of the gospel will be maintained. The Lord, therefore, sent this mighty man of valor, this Saul the Benjamite—head and shoulders taller than his fellows, of sound heart and decided purpose and devout spirit—to wage war with the adversaries of free grace. I have said that the truth has always been assailed and is it not the case? It was the clouding of this light, the almost quenching of it, which occasioned the darkness of the medieval period. It was Luther's clear sight of this truth and the astonishing thunders with which he uttered it, which brought about the Reformation. And though there are other truths of great importance—and we would not depreciate their value for a single moment—yet this one, whenever it has flashed forth with brilliance before the eyes of men, has always been the means of restoring evangelical doctrines and at the same time exercising a powerful influence over men's hearts and bringing much glory to the Savior. Despite this fact, or perhaps because of it, it is still resisted. And at the present day, it is opposed as much as ever, for you hear, continually, the remark that the preaching up of salvation by immediate faith in Christ is very dangerous and opposed to the interests of morality. It is asserted that it cannot be supposed to make men any better and will only create in them a false confidence, and add to their other faults the pride and presumption which grow out of an assured security. We continually hear such observations. The present revival has set all the owls hooting and you know their note—good works are in peril and virtue in jeopardy. However well meant, I believe that at the bottom of these wonderful objections you will discover the old Popery of reliance upon good works. Human nature always did kick against salvation by grace alone, and it always will. Even professing Christians raise the same objection, but they word it cautiously. They say that the preaching up of Jesus Christ as saving men immediately upon their believing in Him ignores too much the work of the Holy Spirit. And they affirm that a great deal more ought to be said about the preparation of the heart, the humbling and abasing of the soul, the law work, the inward sense of need and so on. There may be some truth in this as seen from a certain point, and I should be disposed to hear such criticisms patiently, but I fear that in not a few instances the remarks are suggested by a measure of departure from the simplicity of the gospel—the very essence of which lies in the words, "Believe and live." There is a danger of meaning, "salvation by

works," while we use the phrase, "the work of the Spirit." Zeal for the inner life may only be a convenient method for covering up pure legalism. I will, therefore, assert it boldly that salvation by *feelings* is as unscriptural as salvation by works—and that Paul did not cry out against those who trusted in works with greater vehemence than he would now have called out against any who rely upon their terrors and convictions, or who imagine that their feelings any more than their doings, may be joined on to the finished work of Christ as a ground of trust. Jesus Christ alone is a complete and all-sufficient foundation for faith. It is by believing in Him that men are justified—and in no degree by anything else.

We shall use our text, this morning, with the view of dealing with that class of objections which are founded upon the work of the Holy Spirit. It would be a grievous fault in any preaching if it did not ascribe honor to the Holy Spirit, nor could we too severely rebuke any ministry which ignored His divine working. But on the other hand, it is no less a fault to misrepresent the Spirit's work and set it up in a kind of competition with the work of the Lord Jesus. Faith is not opposed to the Spirit, but is the child of it—"We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."

Two things I shall try to do—may the Holy Spirit enable me—for on His mysterious teachings my mind relies for guidance into the truth. First, I shall labor to *declare the Christian's hope*. Then, secondly, I shall endeavor to *show the relation of that hope to the Holy Spirit.*

I. Let me DECLARE THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE. "We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." Concerning the Christian's hope, let us notice, first, *its singularity*. The Jews had a hope founded upon their *descent*. "We have Abraham for our father," they said. "We were free born; we were never in bondage to any man. The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we." They looked down upon Gentiles as uncircumcised and despised them. Brethren, we have no such hope. We do not expect to be saved by virtue of our parentage. We cannot boast of fleshly descent from Abraham, neither do we rest upon the fact that we are, some of us, the children of godly parents, and that from generation to generation, saintly names occur in our pedigree. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and no more, however pure the flesh may be. The children of God are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God. Carnal descent leaves us heirs of wrath even as others. We have no belief in a pretended Abrahamic Covenant made with the seed of believers according to the flesh. We have no reliance upon anything that comes to us by the way of the natural birth, for that would make us like that son of the bondwoman who was born after the flesh. Those who glory in their birth may do so at their leisure—we have no sympathy with their glorying. Our hope is altogether distinct from the hope of the Jew.

Neither have we any confidence in outward rites and ceremonies. Paul has said, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision," and we hold that if you put any other rite in the place of

circumcision the same statement is true. No infant baptism, no immersion, no mass, no sacrament, no confirmation, no *ceremony* of any kind can, in any measure or degree, be rested upon as the soul's righteousness. What if the rites which we believe that God, Himself, had given were authenticated to us by a voice out of the excellent glory? Yet on those rites we dare not build, no, not for an instant. No blood of bullocks or of goats after the old law and no unbloody sacrifice of the mass after the modern legality of Popery can we rest upon. The beggarly elements of a visible external religion we have left behind as childish garments, unfitted for men in Christ Jesus. No, brethren, we are wide as the poles asunder from all who rest upon outward forms and ceremonial religiousness. We hope to be saved, not because we attend a place of worship, nor because we have made a profession of religion, but because we have obtained righteousness by faith.

We differ, also, from those who place reliance upon moral virtues and spiritual excellencies—and even from those who would have us found our hope upon certain graces supposed to be the works of the Holy Spirit. Had we been the most courageously honest, had we been the most chastely pure, had we never offended against the law of man in any respect whatever, if we could say with the apostle, "As touching the law, blameless," and if, like the young man in the gospel narrative, we could say of the commandments, "All these things have I kept from my youth up," yet would we count our virtues and obedience to be but dross that we might win Christ and be found in Him, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. We dare not hope to be acceptable with God because of anything good that is in us by nature, or may be infused into us by grace. We are accepted in the Beloved, and apart from Him, we look not to be found acceptable. Even what the Holy Spirit works with us does not furnish us with any merit which we can plead, for it is a gift of grace, and no part of our justifying righteousness. We rest upon Jesus Christ crucified and not upon our faith, our repentance, our prayers, our conquests of sin, our likeness to Christ. Right away from anything that comes from us or to us we look to Jesus, who is all our salvation, the Alpha and Omega, the author and the finisher of faith. Our faith is singular, then, because it differs from that of the Jew, who boasts in his carnal descent. It differs from that of the religionist, who rests upon outward forms, and that of the self-righteous man, who depends upon his own works in whole or in part. These three forms of dependence we renounce from the very depth of our hearts. And any other form of dependence upon anything that can be done by man is equally detestable to us. We know that if we are saved it must be upon quite another ground than that of the merit of works of any sort or kind. "We wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."

Secondly, consider *the specialty* of our hope. Taking our text in connection with the 4th verse, we remark that our hope is in grace alone. According to Paul, any man who tries to be justified by the law has alto-

gether given up salvation by grace—therefore, we trust for righteousness in Christ alone, and look entirely to the free mercy of God. If I ever get to heaven, it will be in no measure because I deserve to be there, but because God willed that I should enter glory by His abounding grace. No man has any claim upon God whatever. If God gives man what he may claim in justice, He will award him eternal destruction from the glory of His power—that is all man has a right to—he is an undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving sinner. If any good thing, therefore, comes to us, it must be entirely on the ground of goodness freely given to the undeserving. It is pardon extended to the guilty. It is infinite compassion looking upon our misery and determining to reveal itself in a free gift. It is not to be won by effort—not to be deserved nor purchased—but bestowed solely because He "will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion." Our hope stands on pure grace, sovereign grace, grace unqualified. God blesses us because He is good, not because we are so. God saves us because He is gracious, not because He sees any grace inherent in us. He blesses us according to His great love with which He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins. And therefore grace must ever be the subject of our praise. We can never endure the preaching of any other confidence, for we know it to be a delusion and a snare.

Thirdly, consider *the ground* of our hope. A groundless hope is a wretched thing. But our hope has a firm foundation. It is founded upon right and is called, "the hope of righteousness by faith." Righteousness is a solid basis for hope. If we had a hope which disturbed or destroyed or diminished the luster of the righteousness of God, the sooner we were rid of it the better. But we need not detract in any degree from the severity of divine justice in order to sustain our hope. We expect to be saved by an act of justice as well as by a deed of mercy. A strong expression to use—and we use it advisedly. We reckon that by faith we are saved by a method which as much vindicates the justice of God as if He had cast us into hell—a plan by which the divine righteousness is manifested, rather than obscured. Observe that our hope is the hope "of righteousness." That is to say, a hope arising out of the fact that we are righteous and therefore, God will treat us as such. "Strange hope," says one, "for we are guilty." That we admit with deepest shame and we disown all reliance upon our own righteousness, which we know to be but filthy rags. But still, we have a glorious hope based upon the fact that we are, at this moment, actually righteous before God. By faith, we are as righteous as if we had never sinned. Those eyes which can discern the slightest flaw, gaze upon us and discern our inmost thoughts—but they discover no flaw in our righteousness. Like burning suns, they search us through and through, but our righteousness endures the search and comes forth unscathed from the heat of that consuming fire. This day, having believed in Jesus Christ, "There is therefore now no condemnation to us." "Being justified by faith we have peace through Jesus Christ our Lord." We have a righteousness which we dare present before God, for it is perfect. In it, there

is no omission and no excess. We are righteous before God and without fault before His throne. Bold words, but not bolder than the apostle used when he said, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather that is risen again." Now, brethren, if we have a hope founded upon righteousness, it is well sustained, for where justice lends its aid to bless, we are sure that all the other divine attributes will co-operate. But is it, indeed, the fact that we are righteous? According to Holy Scripture, it is undoubtedly so. We are not righteous in ourselves. Have we not, with detestation, flung away that thought? But we know that it is written, "To him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Even David, also, describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness without works, saying, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." When we put our trust in Christ Jesus, His blood cleanses us from all sin. Does divine perfection want us to be more clean than that? Cleansed from all sin! When we trust in Jesus Christ, He is made of God unto us righteousness—do we require a more perfect and glorious righteousness? Our Redeemer finished transgression and made an end of sin. What remains of that of which an end is made? What more do we need than everlasting righteousness? What more does God Himself require? Don't you know, beloved, how the Lord, Himself, has said concerning His church, "This is the name with which she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness"? I said that, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, we are as accepted as if we had never sinned. I correct myself—had we never sinned, we could only have stood in the righteousness of man. But this day, by faith, we stand in the righteousness of God Himself. The doings and the dying of our Lord Jesus Christ make up for us a wedding dress more glorious than human merit could have spun, even if unfallen Adam had been the spinner.

"With my Surety's vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One."

Here is the footing of our hope, then, that we are righteous in the righteousness of Christ, accepted in the Beloved, complete in Him, and perfect in Christ Jesus.

This righteousness, we have not obtained by any process which has occupied a great deal of time and exhibited our ability and tried our strength, but it is the righteousness of faith. We have believed and we are righteous. "Strange doctrine," says one. Not at all! It is the way by which Abraham became righteous, for it is written, "Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Along this path all the ancient saints traveled and sang, "Surely in the Lord Jehovah have we righteousness and strength." This is the only possible way to righteousness and blessed is the man who follows it and knows that by faith in the great substitutionary sacrifice, he is righteous before God.

We will now dwell a minute upon *the substance of this hope*. Suppose you were all perfectly righteous—what would you expect from God? For you cannot expect more, at any rate, than we do who have the righteousness of faith. We expect to die triumphantly, glorying in our exalted Head. We expect, as soon as our breath has left our body, to be with Him where He is, that we may behold His glory. We expect to sit at the right hand of God, even the Father—because Christ is there. We expect to rise again at the blast of the archangel's trumpet, when the Lord, who is our righteousness, shall descend upon the earth. We expect, then, to be manifested because He will be manifested, for, "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 expect to share in all the glories of His millennial reign and when comes the end and He delivers up the kingdom to the Father, we expect to be there and forever in the perfection of bliss and glory to dwell with Him, always singing, "Worthy is the Lamb," never singing, "Worthy am I," but always saying, "We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." We will never claim that our robes were not defiled, or that we cleansed them ourselves. We reckon upon this and we reckon upon it because we are righteous. Do you see this? No man has a right to expect a reward if he has not a righteousness to which it is due—but lo, He who is all in all to us, our covenant Head, deserves the reward—and He has transferred that reward to us who are members of His body, and so are one with Him. We wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

Once more upon this point, notice *the posture which our hope takes up*. We are *waiting* for this hope—waiting. Would it not have been better to have said, "We are working"? No, it would have spoiled the sense altogether. To complete the foundation of our hope of righteousness by faith, we have nothing more to do except to wait for the reward of what is done. To the garment which covers us, we dare not think of adding a single thread. Why should we? To the acceptance in which we stand before God, we cannot hope to add a single jewel. Why attempt it? Has not Jesus said, "It is finished"? As far as justifying righteousness is concerned, we are as righteous as we shall be when robed in light. We shall cast our crowns before the throne of God. We are at rest, waiting in peace. It is true we are working for other reasons and other purposes, but as far as the righteousness of faith is concerned, we are waiting, not working. Waiting—that is the posture of confidence. We are not hurrying, bustling, and running about in anxiety, but we are at rest, knowing that the reward will come. As the workman, when his six days' work is over, goes up to his master's pay table and waits for his wages, we believe that the meritorious work by which heaven is procured for us is all done. And therefore, we are waiting in the name of Jesus to take the reward, which as a matter of justice is due to Him and has been, by His dying testament, transferred to us.

Waiting implies continuance. The Galatians wanted to be more sure than faith could make them and so they ran off to get circumcised and

observed days, weeks, months, and all sorts of carnal ordinances. But the apostle says, "We through the Spirit wait." We ask no touch of priests, or charm of magic rites. We are thoroughly furnished in our blessed Lord and are content to abide in Him. Our faith is not for today and tomorrow only, but for time and eternity. We are rooted and grounded in faith in Christ.

"All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to their King."

"I thought it was a race," says one, "a combat." Oh, yes, we will tell you about that another time, but that has nothing to do with our righteousness, nothing to do with the ground of our acceptance before God—and that is what we are speaking about just now. As far as that is concerned, "It is finished," sounded from the tree of Calvary and that, "It is finished," brings the righteous to perfect peace—and there they sit and wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. I have said enough upon the first point and must hasten to the second.

II. THE RELATION OF THIS MATTER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT. We may be quite sure that the doctrine of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ cannot be opposed to the work of the Spirit of God, for never, without blasphemy, can we imagine anything like a division in the purposes and works of the sacred persons of the adorable Trinity. The will of the Father, the will of the Son and the will of the Spirit must be one. It is a perverse forgetfulness of the unity of the Godhead to suppose otherwise. That which glorifies Jesus cannot dishonor the Holy Spirit—we may be quite sure of that.

But observe, brethren, it is the Spirit's work to destroy the pride of man. All flesh is grass and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of grass. The grass withers because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it. All the vaunted comeliness of the natural man is to be destroyed by the Holy Spirit—and does not the doctrine of righteousness by faith wither up the glory of man? What can do it more effectually? I have seen the proud Pharisee leer with a scornful hatred when he has heard this doctrine. "What?" he cries, "After all I have done for years, am I to come to Christ just as if I had been a thief or a harlot and be saved by charity?" He cannot bear it. He will not have it. Now the Spirit of God designs to stain the pride of all glorying and to bring into contempt all the excellency of the earth—and this doctrine is the appropriate instrument for His work and is, therefore, consistent with the mind of the Spirit.

Another office of the Holy Spirit is to exalt Christ. "He shall glorify Me," said Jesus. And does not this doctrine glorify Jesus, since it makes Him the head and front, the all in all of a sinner's hope by informing him that nothing but faith in Jesus will save him? Is not this according to the mind of the Spirit?

O beloved, the Holy Spirit is no rival to the Redeemer, but a glorious coworker, delighting to honor the Son.

We know, beloved that the Spirit of God works under the economy of grace only. The apostle says, "Received you the Spirit by the works of the law?" Nobody ever received the Spirit by his own works, or as a matter of merit. Since, then, the Spirit only comes to men in connection with the great principle of grace, and justification by faith is the essential doctrine of grace, it must be perfectly consistent with His mind. And you may be sure of this, poor sinner, that there is no deep, mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit which can, if rightly understood, stand in conflict with the gospel announcements that, "Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." And, "Whosoever believes in Him is not condemned," and, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." Salvation by grace through faith and the operations of the Holy Spirit must be consistent.

Carefully note that this righteousness by faith must be consistent with the work of the Spirit, because the faith which brings this righteousness is *never exercised by any but those who are born of the Spirit*. The flesh relies upon works. It is a somewhat remarkable circumstance, perhaps, but so it is, that sinful flesh, which is barren of all real excellence, always clings to merit. The natural man persists in the belief that he has something to do and yet he can do nothing. He grasps with all his might the sword which cuts him. You cannot get him to see that—

"Till to Jesus Christ you cling
By a simple faith,
'Doing' is a deadly thing
'Doing' ends in death."

He finds fault with it. He cannot bear it. Of course he cannot—Ishmael is the bondwoman's son and has the nature of his mother in him. That which is born of the Spirit instinctively clutches the promise, even as Isaac did, for Isaac knew that he had no right to the inheritance except according to the promise, for, according to the flesh, Ishmael was the first born. The new-born life in every man runs instinctively to grace and lives by faith. You shall never find simple faith in Jesus exercised by any life except the life that is born of divine seed in the new birth. Here, then, simple faith and the Holy Spirit are related, for the new heart which the Spirit creates is the only soil in which faith will grow.

Again, faith for righteousness is *based on the testimony of the Holy Spirit*. My brethren, why do we believe that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ? On the ground that the Spirit, in the Holy Scripture, has borne witness that it is so. The witness which God gave concerning His Son is the basis for our belief. We accept the witness of the Holy Spirit as contained in these pages. The Bible cannot be anywhere contrary to the mind of the Spirit because it is inspired by the Spirit. So you may rest certain that faith in Jesus Christ as the ground of salvation cannot be opposed to the Spirit's work, because that faith is based upon the Spirit's own testimony concerning Christ.

Moreover, *simple faith is always the work of the Spirit*. No man did ever believe in Jesus Christ for righteousness unless the Spirit of God led him

to it. He can never be brought to it unless the Holy Spirit shall lead him there. Faith is as much the gift of God as Jesus Christ Himself. Nature never did produce a grain of saving faith and it never will.

When a man has believed, *he obtains a great increase to his faith in Jesus by the work of the Spirit*. The Spirit never takes a man off from Jesus Christ as he grows in grace, but He establishes him in his confidence in the righteousness of Christ. The witness of the Spirit in us is a testimony to the faith that Jesus is the propitiation for sin. He never leads us to rest upon the work within, but points us always to Jesus. When He works in us mightily, our faith becomes even more simple and childlike. We sink in our own esteem and rise higher in confidence in Jesus. The Holy Spirit could not be supposed to do this if salvation by faith were an imperfect matter, or dangerous, or dishonoring to Himself.

It is *by the Spirit that we continue to exercise faith*. Notice my text. I will quote it emphatically—"We *through the Spirit* wait for the righteousness by faith." It is not because of any other influence but the influence of the *Spirit* that we come to rest—and continue to rest and wait while we rest—for the hope of the righteousness by faith. The Spirit of God works it all and therefore, He is not in conflict with it. It is that which He plants, waters, fosters, and brings to perfection—and He cannot but love it. Ridiculous, then, absurdly ridiculous, is the attempt to make out that the preaching of justification by faith is derogatory to the ministry and deity of the Holy Spirit.

Let us draw an inference or two before we close. From this subject, the inference is that whoever has this hope of righteousness by faith has the Spirit of God. If your hope, beloved, is based upon your being righteous through faith in Jesus Christ, you have been born again and renewed in heart by the Holy Spirit. Many are puzzled and say, "I wish I knew I had the Spirit." They fancy that the Spirit of God would cause some singular excitement in them—very different from quiet penitence and humble trust. I have even known them suppose that it would cause some very astounding swoonings, palpitations, and I know not what besides. The best evidence of your having the Spirit of God is your depending upon Christ as a little child depends upon its mother. Others may bring other evidence to prove that they are born from above—let them bring the evidence and be thankful that they can bring it. But if you have no other evidence but this, "Jesus Christ is my sole reliance and on Him do I depend," that is enough. All the rest will follow in due course. He that believes has the Holy Spirit in himself. He that believes in Him is not condemned.

Draw a second inference. Wherever there is any other hope, or a hope based upon anything else but this, the Spirit of God is not present. There may be much talk about Him, but the Spirit Himself is not there, for, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ the righteous." The Spirit will not bear witness to man's home-born presumptuous hopes. He bears witness only to the finished work of Jesus Christ. If you are relying upon that, you have the Spirit. If you are

building upon sacraments, works, orthodoxies, feelings, or anything but Jesus Christ, you have not the Spirit of God, for the Spirit of God never taught a man to place his house upon such sandy foundations. Beloved friend, you may, therefore, answer inquiries about what is within, so far as they cause you distress, by turning your eyes to Jesus, the Lord, our righteousness. "Look unto Me," says Jesus, "and be you saved." Look away from self to God's appointed propitiation. On yonder shameful tree hangs all your trust. Look up to Jesus upon His Father's throne, for there dwells your hope.

One further thought I want to leave upon every mind. Nothing should make us speak with bated breath when we are lifting up Christ crucified before the eyes of sinful men. There is no doctrine, there is no experience, there is no decree of the Father, there is no influence of the Spirit which needs, for a moment, make us hesitate when we are extolling the Lord Jesus as an all-sufficient Savior for the very chief of sinners. I stand here, this morning, to solemnly assert before God that I have not a shadow of a hope of seeing His face with acceptance except that which lies in the fact that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. In Him I do unfeignedly trust, and in Him alone. What if I have preached the gospel these 25 years? What if I have brought souls to Jesus, not by the hundreds, but by the thousands through the divine blessing? What if I have been the means of founding and fostering works of usefulness on the right hand and on the left? Truly, if these things were to be gloried in we might glory before men. But far from it! We ascribe them all to the Lord's grace and before His presence we lie in the dust. We have no hope because of our works. No, nor a shadow of hope. We have no reliance upon our graces. No, nor a ghost of a reliance upon them. Jesus Christ stood in my place. I, a guilty sinner, have taken shelter by faith which He has given me, beneath His wings, and I hide myself in Him. There is my hope and that is the hope of every true believer in Christ here I do know—

"Not what these hands have done
Can save this guilty soul.
Not what this toiling flesh has borne
Can make my spirit whole.
Not what I feel or do
Can give me peace with God.
Not all my prayers, and sighs, and tears,
Can bear my awful load.
Your work alone, O Christ,
Can ease this weight of sin.
Your blood alone, O Lamb of God,
Can give me peace within."

Now we preach the same hope to the ungodly. Hear what God's Word says to you. You have broken His law and deserved His wrath. He might justly sweep you down to hell, but behold, He addresses you in tones of divine grace. You have no claim upon Him. You have no right to expect mercy at His hands because of anything in you that could move Him to pity. But in the plenitude of His grace, He has set forth Christ to be a

propitiation for our sins. And the apostle adds, "And not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." We preach Jesus Christ unto you this morning and say in His own words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Come to Christ and trust in Him, and you shall be reconciled to God—

"Your sins shall vanish quite away,
Though black as hell before.
Shall be dissolved beneath the sea
And shall be found no more."

Whoever you may be and in whatever condition of heart you may be—it doesn't matter if you have seven devils in you, or if you are as vile as Lucifer himself in rebellion against God—if you believe in the great atoning sacrifice, you shall have instantaneous pardon and acceptance in the Beloved. O, hold not out against such free and boundless love. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Oh, yield, man. What are your works but sin and death? What are your boasted performances, your virtues, and your excellencies? All rottenness in the sight of the heart-searching God! Quit your refuges of lies, I pray you. Quit them now, lest the avalanche of divine wrath should overwhelm both you and your refuges—

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away,
Like doves to Jesus' wounds.
This is the accepted gospel day,
Wherein free grace abounds."

Trust His Son Jesus. It is His command to you. In other words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," for, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." God save us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Galatians 4, 5:1-6.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—202, 531, 533.

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DECISION—ILLUSTRATED BY THE CASE OF JOSHUA
NO. 1229

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 18, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
Joshua 24:15.

JOSHUA knew that the people who surrounded him, while ostensibly serving Jehovah, were, many of them, secretly worshipping the ancient idols of their Mesopotamian fathers—those seraphim which were once hidden in Rachel's tent and were never quite purged from Jacob's family. Some of them, also, harbored the Egyptian emblems. And some had even fallen into the worship of the gods of the people whom they had displaced and were setting up the images of Baalim in their homes. The people were nominally worshippers of Jehovah, but in reality, many of them had turned aside unto strange gods. Never, in their best days, had the children of Israel been quite divorced from idols, for, as Stephen said of them, even in the wilderness they took up the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of their god Remphan, figures which they made to worship. Now, being a thorough-going, decided, down-right man, Joshua could not endure double-mindedness and therefore, he pushed the people to decision, urging them to serve the Lord with sincerity and, if they did so, to put away altogether all their graven images. He demanded from them a determination for one thing or the other, and cried, "If it seems evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites among whom you dwell." He shut them up to a present choice between the true God and the idols and gave them no rest in their half-heartedness. Anticipating the cry of Elijah upon Carmel, he demanded, in effect, "How long halt you between two opinions? If God is God, serve Him, but if Baal is God, serve him." He demanded a decision and rightly so. Can either earth or heaven be quiet while such a matter is in suspense?

To compel them to assert their decision, he declared his own. A man's own personal example is eloquent beyond the power of words. Hear the grand old man. He cries, "You may hesitate, but my mind is made up once and for all. Judge you as you will, my verdict is already given and my children agree with me—as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah. We have no reverence for the demons of Canaan or the myths of Egypt, who could not preserve their own worshippers—our hearts are loyal to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who brought us up out of

Egypt and gave us this land for a heritage. So far as myself and my sons and my daughters are concerned, the die is cast and Jehovah alone will we serve." This clear avowal on the part of Joshua was not a trick of eloquence or a resolve made for the first time in order to influence his audience—he had so lived that his declaration carried weight with all who heard it, else it had been idle to have uttered it. He had always been a man of firm steps and determined mind. Probably this was one reason why Moses chose him to be his servant and kept him in personal attendance upon himself.

His firmness comes out very clearly in his conduct as one of the 12 spies. The others brought up an evil report of the land, but not so Joshua and Caleb. Though they were only two against ten, yet they boldly maintained their testimony. And when the people spoke of stoning them, they did not falter for an instant, but remained faithful to their consciences. These two men alone survived the graves of the wilderness, because they alone were untainted with the wilderness sins. Take Joshua as a warrior too, for he was called to fight the Lord's battles and you find him always a good soldier of the Lord. What a soldier he was! Saul, in later times, might spare the condemned seed of Amalek, but not so Joshua. As long as Moses held up his hands to pray, the sword of Joshua stayed not in the work of execution. When Israel had crossed the Jordan to attack the Canaanites, he had a commission from the Lord to destroy these outlawed nations and he made thorough work of it. So zealous was he in this war that the day was not long enough for him, and he bade the sun and moon stand still till the Lord's battle was fought to the end. Joshua, like his friend, Caleb, "followed the Lord fully." He might have taken for his motto the word, "*thorough*." He belonged to Jehovah heart and soul, and mind and strength. As the successor of Moses and the type of the Lord Jesus, he put on zeal as a cloak and girded himself with fidelity as a garment. His appointed duty was fulfilled with martial strictness and unswerving steadiness. He had a single eye and a firm hand. He was strong and of good courage—and the Lord was with him. It was no idle boast when the old warrior and prince in Israel said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

We admire fidelity in Joshua and we confess that he needed it. But we may, perhaps, forget that there was never an age in which a decision for God was not equally required. It is well to admire this in another, but it is far better to possess it ourselves. In all times, it is imperative upon men to take their stand for God and truth. In the first household outside of Eden, Abel had need to protest against his elder brother's example and died in consequence. Enoch, when all around walked according to the course of this world, dared to be singular and walked with God. Noah believed God amid universal wickedness and persevered for long years in preparing the ark, though all men mocked his warnings. Abraham forsook country and home, at the command of God, and became a pilgrim and a stranger, dwelling alone and not numbered among the peoples. His

was a grand life, for decided faith made him not only a mighty man, but a king among patriarchs. Each age had its man whose heart was fixed, trusting in the Lord, to serve as a landmark for weaker saints to steer by, and a rock against which the tumult of the people raged in vain. Look at Moses, counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt, exciting a sluggish race to action, facing the tyrant king and leading Israel into the wilderness. What a princely soul grace made him. How firmly did he adhere to right and the truth so that he was faithful to God in all his house. Pass along through the Judges and you find that they were men decided for the Lord, their God, or they would never have delivered Israel. Remember Samuel and David, and Nathan and Elijah. What grandeur surrounded the head of the Tishbite because he was exceedingly zealous for the Lord God of Israel. He was no time-server, as Jezebel and Ahab knew full well. In later years, Daniel is the grand type of decision as we see him opening his window and praying, as before, though he knows that the doom of death hangs over him. The three holy children also are before us defying the devouring flames of the furnace sooner than bow before Nebuchadnezzar's golden image. In New Testament times, John the Baptist rises to the front rank by his resolute fidelity and Pilate sinks to eternal shame by reason of his vacillation. Paul is covered with renown, while Agrippa, who is "almost persuaded," is lost in oblivion. In each age, decision has been the one thing wanted—to bend, bow, and cringe has been fatal—but to stand like iron columns and bronze walls has been safety and honor. Today, the like firmness is needed. We, too, must take our stand, and taking it, must hold it as though we were rooted to the ground. O blessed Spirit, give us grace for this! Faithful Redeemer, set Your image upon us that we, too, may resist even to blood, striving against sin.

My discourse shall run thus—*Decision for the Lord*—let me *describe it, extol it, and demand it*.

I. First, let me DESCRIBE IT. It means many things, all of which must be worked in us by divine grace, or we shall never possess them, though we may have their counterfeits. Decision implies, first, that all *hesitation is gone*. There is a period when the thoughtful mind hangs in equilibrium and it is a question which way the scale will turn. We have a time of testing and proving when the crucibles are brought out and the firing pots are placed among the coals. To come wisely and speedily through this period is a great mercy. This was all over in the case of Joshua—he had finished the proving of all things and reached the holding fast of that which is good. The balance was no longer in suspense. The scale had gone down for God and His cause. It rested in its place never to be moved. Joshua had a mind of his own and he knew his own mind. Doubt had long ago vanished, debate was finally closed, resolve was taken, and taken without a grain of reserve, and consequently action was forcible and ardent. And now, dear friends, it is surely time with some of us, especially with those of us who have reached the prime of life that we, too,

had done with the fickleness of irresolution. Have we not had enough of hesitation, deliberating, trifling and delaying? The time past may suffice for these—has it not been already far too long? You will make no journey, O traveler, if, now that the sun is in its zenith, you do not soon decide which way to walk! Mariner, your voyages will be scant if you lie much longer at anchor! The season of favorable winds is passing away and yet your sail remains unfilled—will you never have solved the problem—"To what port shall I steer? With what cargo shall I load my boat?" Is our life to end in a constant repetition of the question, "What shall I be?" If we could change places with the weathercock and become the toy of circumstances, irresolution might be alright. But for a man, decision is indispensable—he must know where he is and where he is going. And it will be an evidence of salvation to him if he has cancelled doubt by a firm faith in Jesus and ended hesitancy by full consecration to the service of the Lord. O that every man and woman among us had, through divine grace, come to this point, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord".

This state of heart indicates *superiority to the evil influence of others*. While we are children, we are plastic to every hand. We believe what is told us by the last informant. Our judgment is swayed by our parents, schoolmasters, and elders. But, when we come to be men and women, we put away the childish things which controlled us. We ought to put away this propensity to lean upon other men's judgments. Our own understanding should now be exercised, or else why is it given to us? God waits to guide us, but He would have us cry to Him and not follow the trail of our fellows. We should endeavor to have a mind enlightened by grace, decided for God and established in the truth. And then we should strike out our own path for God and His truth—and count it no very great hardship if in that path we should have to walk alone. A man should not be like a house which is one of a row, which would come down with a crash if those on the right and left were removed—he should be altogether detached so that all four walls will stand without another house to buttress them. Alas, I fear that few have reached this point. The most of men are a feeble herd and follow their leaders, having no minds of their own. Woe to them when blind leaders lead them into the ditch. The great guide of the world is fashion and its god is respectability—two phantoms at which brave men laugh. How many of you look around on society to know what to do? You watch the general current and then float upon it. You study the popular breeze and shift your sails to suit it. True men do not so. You ask—"Is it fashionable? If it is fashionable, it must be done." Fashion is the law of multitudes, but it is nothing more than the common consent of fools. The world has its fashions in religion as well as in dress, and many of you feel the influence of it. If you had fallen in among Christ's people, some of you would have made a profession of religion before now, but having, on the contrary, been cast among the ungodly, even though you have some desires towards Christ, you are held

back by the evil influence. What are you but babes, fit for the nursery and the sucking bottle? If you were men, you would stand on your own feet and not need to be carried in someone's arms—

"Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose true,
And dare to make it known!"

Little will it decrease our eternal misery if all the rest of the world should be lost with us. Company in hell will be the reverse of consolation. If we lose heaven for fashion's sake, it will be no solace to us that others lost it, too. We are born alone and shall have to die alone and to be judged alone—it is time that we began to look into our souls' affairs with our best judgment and no longer be as the withered leaf in the wind, or the log in the rapids. God has given to each man a conscience, to each man a heart—and He will not allow men to quench their personal consciences and yield up their hearts to be molded by others—He will hold them personally responsible for the right use of judgment, reason, and heart. Be sure of this. Oh sirs, may every one of us know the Lord for ourselves and forsaking the broad road with its many travelers, may we be bold to walk in the narrow way which leads unto life.

Right decision for God is deep, calm, clear, fixed, well grounded, and solemnly made. Joshua does not speak his determination lightly. Gaze upon the stern warrior's face scarred in many battles, bronzed with exposure, wrinkled with more than 100 years of varied experience! He looks not like a trifler. He speaks not as one who sings a love song and trills it from his lips. His utterances rise from that broad breast of his with the rugged honesty and brave sincerity of a soldier prince. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," as much as if he had said, "I have known my God too many years to forsake Him now. I have not bared my breast to the battle so many scores of times to now be a coward. I have not dwelt under the shadow of the Almighty forty years in the wilderness, and all these years in Canaan that I might seek to idols at last. The golden calf is not for me—I saw it ground to powder long ago. The idols of the Amorites are not for me—I have dashed thousands of them to the ground." He speaks as one who has weighed the matter, counted the cost, and come to a decision which he can defend against all comers. It would be idle to try and shake his resolve—it is as stable as Lebanon. You do not hear in him a timeserver, who, to please men, falls in with the general affirmation. Nor is he a mere scholar, repeating what he has learned by rote, nor a ceremonialist, muttering his creed for form's sake. But you hear an honest man revealing his heart and uttering his inmost soul with awful earnestness, even in that utterance careless of being heard of men except so far as their hearing may be of use to themselves. He speaks with immoveable resolve. His soul is anchored and defies all storms—"As for me and my house *we will,* despite crowds and customs. *We will,* despite temptations and trials. *We will,* despite idols or devils, to

the end of the chapter, serve Jehovah." Such ought the decision of every one of us be, and I earnestly wish that it were so.

That resolve on the part of Joshua was *openly declared*. I want to come straight home to some of you here who have said in your hearts, "Yes, we will serve the Lord," but you have never yet declared your allegiance, for you have thought it quite enough to promise in secret. Does not Joshua's outspoken vow make you blush? You are espoused to Christ, you say, but will there never be an open marriage? Will you never take Him publicly before the eyes of men to be your Lord and husband forever and ever? Does Jesus agree to secret nuptials? Can such a thing be done in a corner? Of old, the candle was put on a candlestick—is it now to be put under a bushel? You say you are His soldier—will you never put on your Prince's uniform? Shall your Captain's colors never adorn you? Will you never come forward and take your Commander's weapon in your hand, and march at His bidding to the fight? That is sorry courage which skulks behind the bushes. That is poor loyalty which never utters the King's name. That is a questionable decision which dares not declare itself to be on the Lord's side. Remember how the Lord Jesus said, "He that denies Me before men, him will I deny before My Father who is in heaven." I like this in Joshua that he would have no one be in doubt as to where he was. He gives them his whereabouts plainly enough. Where Jehovah's altar smokes with the sacrifice of bullocks, where the paschal lamb is slain and the blood is sprinkled, where the high priest offers incense to the one invisible and ever glorious God, there will you find Joshua, and there his sons and daughters, too, for, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Why are you not equally openhearted, O you who love the Lord? What excuses have you for your silence? I am not able to see what the good of a decision is however firm and deep, if it is never asserted. It may be good for the man who has made it, but as far as society is concerned, what can be the influence of a decision which is altogether secret? Why, my brethren, should there be concealment? Our God has not loved us with reserve and kept His mercy in the dark. Our Savior has not gone sneaking down the ages, ashamed to confess the mortals whom He loves. And if He has never been ashamed of us, we ought never to be ashamed of Him. O, my brethren, can you hesitate? Are you not ashamed of being ashamed, and afraid to be any longer afraid? Out with it! There, run up the colors to the masthead, where every eye may see them and there let them be nailed. And if any man is at war with Jesus, he is at war with us. Let earth and hell know this once and for all.

In Joshua's case his resolve was not only openly acknowledged, but *earnestly carried out*. Some have declared themselves on the Lord's side and yet they do not serve the Lord. Their names are down in the church book and they attend to the outward ordinances, but as for any serving of the Lord, you will have to search for it and search in vain. Joshua went in for serving God in truth. He was a soldier and if anyone had

asked him, "Whose soldier are you, Joshua?" he would have answered, "I am God's soldier." "Whose battles do you fight?" "I fight the battles of Jehovah." "And what is your object in fighting?" "To glorify Jehovah." He was committed to the Lord's cause from head to foot. Many professors do not understand what this means. They view religion as a kind of weekend farm. They have another estate which is their home and main care—and the kingdom God is a weekend farm—to be mainly managed by the minister as a bailiff. Their religion gets their spare time and odd thoughts. Jesus comes in for the cold meat that is left over, while the world has the hot steaks. Religion is by no means the great channel along which the strength of their life runs, but it is a sort of backwater—they let the waste water run there when they have more than enough to turn the mill-wheel of business. They are seen at prayer meetings when there are no accounts to settle and no new books to read. They do something for the church of God when they have nothing to do, no friend coming to spend the evening with them and no amusement available. They treat the Lord Jesus Christ very indifferently. They hope they will be saved by Him—I hope they will, too! They say they will be wonders of grace if they are and *I think they will, too*. Such conduct to the bleeding Lamb is dastardly and I hate it. As for me, I will be bold enough to say with Joshua, "I will serve the Lord"—that is to say, if I am His servant, I will be His servant and lay myself out for Him. I will not bear His name, eat His bread, and wear His clothes, and yet do Him no service. Better die than live so dishonestly. Certain servants of great men are kept merely for show. You shall go into my lord's house and see a fine fellow who is paid a considerable income. What does he do? He is not kept to do anything—he is the ornament of the establishment—the display of those magnificent legs and that beautiful form, which looks so well in uniform, is all his master gets. Surely, some Christians suppose that they are engaged on the same terms and that the Lord Jesus Christ, having the distinguished honor of having their names in His church book, is perfectly satisfied though they do nothing. These are the fellows who are everlastingly grumbling at those who do serve—and become the pests of the church. Be not like they; better far to die outright. Serve the Lord with real labor, to whose free grace and dying love you owe your all.

Once more: Joshua's decision was *adhered to throughout the whole of his life*. He had begun early in the service of God and he never left it. A hundred years rolled over his head, but we never discover in him any desire to take up with the service of Baal or the service of the seraphs. He continued to the last, true to the resolve, "We will serve Jehovah." Happy are we, brethren, if grace enlisted us in the service of Christ while we were yet young. Happier, still, if grace has kept us to middle age still firm in our young resolve. And happiest of all shall we be if, when our hair is gray, we shall be able to say, "O God, You have been my God from my youth, and until this time I have declared Your wondrous works. Now, also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not." He who

decides aright for God decides for eternity. Beloved, you never will quit serving God. There never was such a one yet. My Lord and Master never fires His old servants, nor do His old servants ever run away from Him. The more they serve Him, the more they wish to serve Him. Their physical strength may fail them, but never their love to His work. They still bring forth fruit in old age to show that the Lord is upright. Blessed are they who have this abiding thoroughness in the cause of the Lord their God.

II. Let me now PRAISE DECISION. In religion, nothing is more desirable than to be out and out in it. With some little variation, I might say of it as of knowledge—

"A little piety's a dangerous thing,
Drink deepest draughts at that refreshing spring."

To enjoy religion you must plunge into it. To wade into it up to the ankles may make you shiver with anxieties, doubts, and questions till you resemble a trembling boy unwillingly entering a bath on a cold morning. But to plunge into its depths is to *secure a glow of holy joy*. Some of you are ill at ease at sea, but my friend in the blue jacket over yonder likes it well enough, for he is always there. His home is on the rolling waves and there is no seasickness for him. Those of you who make short trips upon the sea of piety and do a little coasting religion now and then, are sick with doubts and fears. But if you sailed always on that sea, you would get your sea legs. You would gain full assurance and see the glories of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. It is with true religion as with the American's orchards. A gentleman was invited into a garden to taste the apples. "No," he said, "I would rather not," and being often asked to come and partake, yet refusing, the other said, "I guess you've a prejudice against my apples." "Yes," said the man, "I have tasted a few of them and they are very sour." "But which," said he, "did you taste?" "Why, those apples which fall into the road over the hedge." "Ah, yes," said the owner, "they are as sour as crabs. I planted them for the good of the boys, but if you come into the middle of the lot you will find a different flavor"—and it was so.

Now, just round the border of religion, along the outer hedge, there are some very sour apples of conviction, self-denial, humiliation, and self-despair. They are planted on purpose to keep hypocrites and mere professors out. But in the midst of the garden are luscious fruits, mellow to the taste and sweet as nectar. The central position in religion is the sweetest; the nearer to God, the sweeter the joy. If I were a German, which I am not, the last sort of German I should like to be would be an Alsatian or a Lorrainer, because I would have to be a German by nationality, but might be even more a Frenchman in manners. And if ever the fight should be renewed between the two nations, the fighting would be sure to come very near my farm and home. I should not like to be a German-Frenchman, or a French-German in time of war. I would prefer to be of pure breed. As to sacred things, I would not be a neutral. No, no, let

me be out and out, thorough and decided. If you are a Christian, be a Christian. If you serve the devil, serve him out and out. And if you serve the Lord, serve Him with your whole heart and soul and strength.

A decision for God enables a man to direct his ways. A man who resolves that he will serve the Lord knows his way about the world. Something will happen to you in business tomorrow. You will have a fine opportunity—you will be able to make a great deal of money. But it will be by sailing very near the wind and you would rather not have the transaction published in *The Times*. When that temptation comes before you, how will you act? I do not know, but if you have made up your mind that you will serve the *Lord*, you will not need to consult your partner—your course will be clear. Nine out of every ten questions which can possibly come before you in your business are already answered when the grand question is settled. Is such an action dishonest? Then it matters nothing how profitable it might be—it is dismissed as quite beyond consideration. Is such a course necessitated by honesty? Then let it be followed whatever the loss may be. David prayed, "Lead me in a plain path because of my enemies." And the man who has made up his mind by divine grace that he will serve the Lord, has that prayer fulfilled.

This saves many men from temptation. Satan tempts those who can be tempted, but when he finds men sufficiently resolved, there is a certain order of temptation with which he never assails them again. He adapts his devices to our standing and does not use, for lion-hearted minds, those petty nets with which he takes small birds. As a giant walks along unconscious of the cobwebs across his path, so does a thoroughly consecrated man break through a thousand temptations which, indeed, to him are no longer temptations at all.

Thorough-going men *wield a mighty influence*. Joshua was able to speak for his house as well as for himself. Many fathers cannot speak for themselves and therefore, you may guess the reason why they cannot speak for their families. Joshua's religion was so intense that it, by the divine blessing, set his sons burning with the same flame. I have known a Christian woman to be so low in grace that she never influenced one of her children to desire to be like she was. And I have heard of fathers, who we hope were Christian men, whose force to repel from piety was greater than their power to attract to it. God give us more vitality in our own religion and we shall influence our children and servants—and from them the savor will spread all around. For this reason and a thousand more, it is desirable beyond measure to be decided and resolute for the Lord's cause. Hesitation and wavering can answer no purpose, but a prompt decision is in every way commendable.

III. I find I shall not be able to say one half of what I intended to have said this morning and therefore, I shall come to a close by DEMANDING THIS DECISION FOR CHRIST which I have described and praised. May the Holy Spirit enable you to answer to the demand. Decision is required because the Lord deserves to have it. He who made us ought not to be

served hesitatingly. He who gave His Son to die for us ought not to be trifled with. By the splendor of Deity and the glory of the cross, I claim your whole hearts for my Lord. If the Christian religion is a lie, it is a most detestable one and it ought to be abhorred heartily. But if the service of God is indeed right, and if religion is a matter of fact, it demands our whole heart, soul, and strength, nor should it have less. The service of the Lord is not a matter to be loosely touched with the tips of one's fingers, but it should excite all the powers and passions of our entire nature to obedient action. My dear hearer, look at yourself for a moment. Is there much in you—taking the largest estimate you can of yourself? Are your dimensions so very vast? Compare yourself with the thrice holy God. Those tall archangels, who bow before Him, are as nothing in His sight. What must you be? And if you, as a whole, are so little, do you dream of dividing yourself and giving God a part? The heaven, even the heaven of heavens and the realms of space are not enough for Him. And all things that He has made are but as a drop in a bucket compared with His infinite majesty. As for this little dominion of your body and soul, will you carve it out among rival monarchs and insult the Lord by offering Him a corner, while you save spaces for the world, the flesh, and the devil? Mock not the majesty of heaven. If a gnat that dances in the summer sunbeam above the Rhine should talk of dividing its allegiance between the German Emperor and the French Marshal, you would smile. Shall you, you insignificant creature, talk of dividing yourself between God and Mammon?

Let me demand of you, dear friends that you give to God your whole mind and soul, because to attempt a middle position is mean and dishonorable. Who claims to be indifferent to the claims of virtue? Who dares to be neutral in the battle between truth and a lie? Brand him as a coward! To refuse to take our place upon great questions is disgraceful. And when the issue is one which divides the unwise—a question between holiness and sin, between God and the devil—why it is a mean thing for a man to insinuate that he really is not called upon to decide and that he may take up a position midway between the two. God save you from such dishonor. If, after all, the world and the things thereof are best, say so and take your side. And this morning, if not another person should do it, say in your heart, "As for me and my house, we will serve ourselves and the world." If you mean it, say it out straight and do not hide it. But for a man to say, "I cannot determine what I shall serve, but I rather think I shall serve myself till I get pretty nearly worn out. And then I shall turn about and try what is to be done with religion," is detestable. Such beings are hardly as respectable as oxen and asses, which at least know their owners.

Not to decide for the Lord is dangerous in the last degree. There is Lot in Sodom—perilous is his position, but the angels come to him and they say, "This city is to be burned with fire, you must escape." Lot is on the road at once and before long he reaches the mountain and is safe. His

wife is willing to go, too, and yet unwilling—she wavers and delays. She has not quite made up her mind. She does not like leaving that house full of new furniture and that wardrobe of fine linen. Moreover, her neighbors, though they did not go to chapel every Sunday and were rather loose in their morals, were very cheerful, chatty people—she did not quite like leaving them. See, she looks back! She may look back forever, for there she stands, transformed into a pillar of salt. Oh, you who think the world has many attractions. You who would like to serve God but still feel that there is a great deal to be said on the other side of the question, come and taste this salt. Its acrid flavor may be healthy to you if it makes you, from now on, dread dallying and hesitating.

Remember there are no curses in the Bible more terrible than those which are directed against those who stand hesitating between two opinions. Listen to this Old Testament curse, you who make no profession, you who contradict your profession by ill lives. "Curse you Meroz, says the Lord, curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Did they fight against the Lord? Not they. Why are they cursed? Because they did not fight *for Him*. What if this curse is hovering over this house to fall upon the head of those men who go not forth to the help of the Lord! Will it fall upon you? Now, listen to the New Testament word which comes from those lips which never spoke too roughly—lips like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh. Here they are—"I would you were cold or hot. So then because you are neither cold nor hot I will spit you out of My mouth." Who is this offensive one? Did he burn the Savior's lips by hot persecutions? No. Did he freeze them with utter coldness of heart? No. He was a harmless, good sort of person—moderate, sober, easy-going—in fact, a lukewarm man. He was a little warm—only a little more and he would have been hot. He was a little cool—only a little cooler and he would have been as refreshing as the snows of Lebanon. He was neither cold nor hot. Yes, and Christ said He loathed him. I do not read of His spitting anything out of His mouth except this, but this He cannot bear. Some of you, if you judged yourselves, would say you are not good enough for heaven, but rather too good for hell. Alas, hell is your portion and an inner dungeon therein. Repent of your double-mindedness and turn unto the Lord with purpose of heart.

I can see where you are, you betweenites. There is the army of God, a vast and mighty host on yonder hill. I see the glittering warriors ready for the fray. Yonder encamps the host of Satan on the opposite hill. Black and grim is the prince—and fierce are they that follow him. Where are we this morning? Some of us can say we are with the Prince Emanuel, though we are poor warriors, yet we serve under His standard. Possibly there are some here who are on the wrong side, but are yet so honest that they will not deny that they are enlisted on the opposite side. But my hearers, *where are you?* Where are you? "We are thinking about it." But where *are* you while you are thinking? "We are considering and judg-

ing." But *where are you now?* Mark this! When the fight comes and our Lord's artillery shall come into play—and when the adversaries on the other hand reply to us—you will receive the shot from *both* sides. And when the armies come to deadly hand-to-hand fight, you will be trampled down by both. Do we not read of some who will wake up "to shame and everlasting contempt"? The saints will be ashamed of you, because you did not join with Christ in the day of battle. And the adversary himself will despise you because you shrunk away, even from him. Be one thing or the other.

In closing, remember that to be between the two is, after all, utterly impossible. Though I have thus pictured some as hovering between the two armies, it is not actually the case, for every man is on one side or the other. You are either dead or alive. You are either justified or condemned. You are either in the gall of bitterness or enjoying the sweets of liberty. No man can serve two masters and no man can be without a master. God will not have half the soul—and the world will not have half the soul. Both God and sin are imperious and monopolizing—they will have the whole or none—

"God and Mammon! O be wise,
Serve them both? It cannot be.
Ease in warfare, saint and miser?
These will never well agree.
Give the fawning foe no credit,
So the bloody flag's unfurled.
That base heart, the Word has said it,
Loves not God that loves the world."

Put Christ into the heart and He will chase sin out, or keep sin in the soul and sin will put down every better thought till the man is altogether vile. When you get home write this down if you will, "*As for me, I will serve the Lord*." Put your name to it in earnest. Or, if this is not to your mind, write, "*As for me, I will serve the world*," and put your name to it. I long to drive you to a decision. If God is God, serve Him. If Baal is God, serve him. O, may the Spirit of God lead you to decide for God and His Christ this very moment and He shall have the praise forever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Joshua 24:11-27; Psalm 101.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—63 (SONG III), 671, 645.

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A HOLY AND HOMELY RESOLVE
NO. 1230

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

"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when will You come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." Psalm 101:2.

THE 100th psalm is perhaps the best known song of praise in the Word of God. To sing the "Old Hundredth" has been a habit of worshippers from generation to generation—the custom of every succeeding age as it is still our custom. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all you lands." Now, it is somewhat significant that the 101st, which immediately follows it, should be such a practical psalm—all about how a man should walk in his house, how he should put away sin from his very eyes, and keep himself from evil companionship. What does it seem to teach us but this, that the best praise is purity and that the best music in the world is holiness? If we would extol the Lord, the best way to do it is to labor to keep His mind before us and to walk in His commandments. The sweetest sounds that ever came from the heaving bellows or the organ pipes can never have so much melody in them as a life that is tuned to the example of Christ. If we obey, we praise. He sings best who works best for God. There is no praise that excels that which is like the praise of angels, "Who do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word."

I suppose that this psalm was written by David about the time when he was invested with regal authority and took the reins of government in his hands. Three times, you will remember, he was anointed king. First, in the house of his father, Jesse the Bethlemite, when "Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brethren" (1 Sam 16:13); secondly, at Hebron, when "The men of Judah came and there they anointed him king over the house of Judah" (2 Sam 2:4); and thirdly, when all the elders of Israel came to the king 7 ½ years afterwards, "And David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel" (2 Sam 5:3). With the solemn responsibilities of government in view, he sat himself down and considered how he would behave himself when he should come to the throne. And this was the resolution which he passed and labored by the grace of God to carry out. It has been well said that in this psalm David was merry and wise. He was merry, for he said, "I will sing of mercy and judgment." And he repeated his resolution to sing by saying, "Unto You, O Lord, will I sing." Such merriment as that it would be well for all of us to cultivate. We cannot sing too much when we sing unto the Lord. And provided that

the songs are the songs of Zion, the more of them we sing and the merrier we are in singing them, the better. But he was merry and wise, for having spiritual merriment, he also sought to have spiritual holiness. And so he passed this resolution—"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way."

Our meditation, then, will be of a practical character, and it will divide itself thus. First, in the text we have *a comprehensive resolution*—"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way." Then, as if he were amazed at his resolve, feeling how much he had resolved to do and how little power he had to do it, we have, in the second place, *a devout ejaculation*—"O when will You come unto me?" But, still being firmly set upon his first hallowed resolution, he returns to it, again, and that leads us, in the third place, to notice *a particular application of his resolution*. He applies it to his own domestic household life—"I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." May God the Holy Spirit, who alone can make us practically holy, help us now while we consider the holy resolutions before us.

I. WHAT A COMPREHENSIVE RESOLUTION THIS IS. "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way."

With a full knowledge of all the care and circumspection it entailed on himself—and with as clear an apprehension of all the risks of popularity it involved among his subjects—this was David's *deliberate choice*. Influenced by the grace of God he, like his son Solomon after him, chose wisdom as the principal thing and accounted the fear of the Lord as the choicest safeguard. Many a young man, if he were about to be promoted to a throne, would say, "I will behave myself grandly. In the dignified position to which I am about to be lifted up, I will be every inch a king. I will make them know how stately is my bearing, how sovereign is my word, how nobly I can play my part, how well a crown befits my head. There shall be no Shah or Sultan more dignified than I." David might have chosen an empty conceit, but he did better, he elected a discreet conduct. He said not, "I will behave myself grandly," but, "I will behave myself *wisely*." There are many, too, who, having David's opportunity, would have said, "I will have a merry time of it; once let me mount to Israel's throne, I will give myself up to the full indulgence of every passion. There shall be nothing that my soul shall lust for, but what my hand shall grasp. Let me have horses and chariots in abundance. Give me singing men and singing women. I will get myself all manner of the delights of the flesh with whatsoever enjoyments I can devise. I will behave myself right joyously when once I come into power." Not so David. His deliberate choice was neither grandeur nor pleasure, but wisdom. "I will behave myself *wisely*."

Now, brethren, there must be some of you just starting in life. Before that household is formed, sit down and consider what is the best way of action. Or, perhaps, though you have not yet left your father's house and commenced business for yourself, you contemplate doing so. This, then,

is the time to take stock of your moral resolutions. Or, it may be you are in such a condition that you are now starting afresh, commencing life anew, though perhaps farther advanced in years and experience of the world than the young man I have just referred to. Now, how will you act? What will you choose? You shall be happy, indeed, if the grace of God leads you to say, "I choose wisdom, the truest and best wisdom. Be it mine to live as God would have me live—understanding His testimonies and yielding obedience to His laws. Gladly would I live as the incarnate wisdom lived when He was here below. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way." I say it was David's deliberate choice. Oh, that every young man and woman here would emulate his example! Oh, that every one of us in our present condition, and in full view of whatever prospects may be opening up before us, might be led now, once and for all, with the full consent of all our powers to say, "Whatever happens to me, this is my resolution—I desire to behave myself wisely in a perfect way. Should others run after gain or fame, ease or luxury, let them cry, 'Who will show me any good?' Let them make self their idol, or follow after gold. As for me, my soul is made up to this one purpose and to seek but this one thing—I would be wise, my God, and behave myself wisely in a perfect way."

This deliberate choice of David was, no doubt, *suggested by a sense of necessity*. He felt that he needed to behave himself wisely. He was to be a king—and a foolish king is no ordinary fool. It used to be a proverb, some three or four hundred years ago, that every king was born a fool. And in truth, they generally so acted as to merit the disgrace. The common people were not too severe in the judgment they passed on their rulers. But, alas, for the misfortunes of a country whose king is a fool. You know what troubles came upon the Jewish nation through Rehoboam and others, who were too foolish to sway the scepter righteously. David could hardly fail to remember that, as he succeeded the dynasty of Saul, Saul's descendants would survive and seek to regain the crown—therefore, he would need to act very discreetly to preserve himself from the pretenders and their faction. He knew that enemies would be sure to track his course to see if they could find any fault with him. He needed, therefore, to have great wisdom if he was to walk aright. "Well," you say, "but the lesson concerns people of rank and pedigree—it does not concern us—we are not going to be kings." Granted, that may be so, but you need wisdom in every grade of society, however lofty or however lowly it may be. The humblest waiting maid, as a Christian, needs wisdom to do her duty and adorn her position. Those entrusted with children need peculiar wisdom, for a child's mind may be warped by a servant as well as by a superior teacher. Any little misfortune happening to a child through your negligence may do it serious damage. If you are a tradesman, you need wisdom in such an age as this, with competition so fierce and temptation so abundant. And I am sure, if you are a father and you wish to see your

children trained up in the fear of God, you have a task before you that might tax the wisdom of a Solomon. It takes true wisdom to judge this boy's disposition and to understand that girl's character, so as neither to be too severe nor too lenient. Much wisdom is needed to know how to deal with each child just as a gardener deals with each separate plant in the conservatory—the one needing dry heat and the other needing moisture—and not injuring or destroying either by applying the wrong treatment. Many have been injudicious with their children, to their own anguish of heart in later days. O parents and heads of households, masters of factories, managers of business houses and you, too—you working men and servants—you all need wisdom and you must have it, or you will make shipwreck. If the fisherman's little boat is wrecked through mismanagement, it is as bad for him, especially if he is drowned in it, as if he had lost the greatest steamship that ever plowed the waters and perished with the vessel. It is his all. And your all is embarked in the momentous voyage of life. If you make shipwreck of the life that God has given you, and the humble position in which He has placed you, it is your all, and to you it is as much a ruin as if you had been a monarch. You need to behave yourselves wisely whatever your vocation in the world may be.

Moreover, David recognized that *to behave one's self wisely, one must be holy,* for he says, "I will behave myself wisely in a *perfect* way." Observe that. He felt he could not be wise if he were unacquainted with the true ideal of absolute unblemished perfection. Wisdom lay only there. Folly might suggest a specious but vacillating policy. That, however, would be an imperfect way. Always remember this. In common life, the wisest thing is the right, straight, undeviating course. The right thing is always the wisest. Sometimes it looks as if it is really necessary to go off the straight line—(you mean to come back again, you know)—just to take a short cut across Bye-Path Meadow and leave the road, for it is covered with flint stones. Surely, you think, it must be better to just cut that corner off. It *seems* so. It *never is*. The tale of Bye-Path meadow is a book of lamentations from beginning to end. Thousands have tried it, but always with the same result. The wise man will keep along the king's highway, cost what it may. We have heard of young men who, under extraordinary pressure, have felt as if they must relax integrity a little to obey a master and thus keep the position they hold. Well, from that time forward their nose has been to the grindstone as long as they have lived. And if they had had the manliness, let alone the godliness, to do the right thing, it would have been the turning point in their entire career and have saved them from a thousand sorrows. But you do not need to be a philosopher and consult huge books to discover how you ought to act under any circumstances. The way to act in every case is to fear God and keep His commandments. Constantly I receive letters asking special counsel for peculiar emergencies. It is to me an everyday annoyance. Persons tell me

of painful dilemmas in which they are placed and frequently wish me to reply to such and such a place, without giving their names. Now, they need not ever write to me for *indulgences*. I have no power to grant them. All trouble might be spared. Straight ahead!—that is the way to go in every case. If the conscience of man is elastic, the law of the Lord is inflexible. "What, and lose all I have?" Yes. You will lose less by doing right than you can possibly lose by doing wrong, for if a man were to lose all the property he possessed by a right action, it were better than that he should lose his *soul* by deliberately choosing to avoid poverty or acquire wealth instead of seeking to abide in the favor of God. "I will behave myself wisely," says David. But he knew that the perfect way, the way of right, the way of God, was the way of wisdom. Prince Bismarck may have a long head and a far-seeing eye, and he may be able to dictate the shrewdest policy under the most distracting complications, but were you to consult him in any strait of your own, he could not tell you anything that is wiser than this—to do justice and righteousness and truth towards your fellow men, and to walk humbly with your God. Keep to the eternal principle which God has revealed. Keep to the sacred instinct which the Holy Spirit sows in every regenerate heart. Keep to the example of your Lord and Master, who has bought you with His precious blood. Should it cost you trouble—should it cost you your life—"It were better to enter into eternal life crippled or maimed than, having two eyes or two feet, to be cast into hell fire." And, "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?" The perfect way is the wise way and the wise way the perfect.

David seems to have felt that this resolution would cost him a great deal of effort and strength. He does not look upon it as a light thing. He weighed it in all its bearings before he said with so much emphasis I WILL. "I will—behave myself wisely in a perfect way." Though he does not say as much, he fully implies determination without power. "My will or desire is to behave myself wisely. My dependence is on Him whose cause I espouse." The next clause seems to say, "I must have more grace and I must get it, too. I must have more help than ever I can find in myself—I must use all the means of grace. I must call in God to be my helper in this matter, for, whatever it may cost, I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way." He felt that character was too momentous to be trifled with—that it must be of sterling metal—or else it were mere dross and that the actions of a man's life were too signal to be insignificant. It shocks me—I cannot help saying it—it shocks me to my very soul when I hear persons talk about the doctrines of grace, which are dear to my heart as life itself, who uphold the principles while they ignore the practices of godliness, for their lives are inconsistent with their professions. I have known professors that never talk so well about theology as they do when they are half drunk—and never seem to be so sound in the faith as when they can hardly stand on their legs. They will tell you that good

works are nothing at all, and they glory in free grace. Ah, dear friends, God save you from being Mr. Talkative who can discuss at great length upon free grace but has never felt the power of it. If the grace of God does not save a man from drunkenness, from lascivious conversation, from lies in trade and lewdness in jests, from slandering your fellow man and scowling at your fellow Christians, then I think the grace of God must be a very different thing from what I read of in this precious book. Either my judgment is at fault or your pretensions are spurious. The grace of God, when it does come, comes freely as the sovereign distinguishing *gift* of heaven—but it makes men to differ and it makes them differ in holiness of character. If a man shall say to me, "Character—I don't care anything about that," I am not quick to answer him, neither need anybody care much about him. I think Rowland Hill was right when he said that he did not believe in a man's religion if his cat and his dog were not the better for it—if everybody in his house were not the better for it. If it does not make you, as a master, gentler and kinder to your servants, if it does not make you, as a servant, more respectful and more diligent, if it does not make you, as tradesmen, more scrupulous and more honest, if it does not make you, as a workman, less of an eye-servant, if it does not, in fact, make you more moral (that is the least thing to say of it)—if it does not make you more holy (that is the higher thing, by far), you may well question whether you know anything about the grace of God in your soul at all. David did not say, "Well, I am washed. He has made me whiter than snow and He has created a new heart and a right spirit within me—and that is quite enough. As to my outward actions, what do they signify? We are not saved by works, you know, it is all of grace." Ah, but that is not the language of David or of any other legitimate child of God. It is this—"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way." I have heard say that where they talk a great deal about good works you will not find them. But I hope among those of us who talk much about grace, good works will always be found, for where good works do not follow upon faith, such faith, as there seems to be, is dead indeed.

God grant you, dear friends, to take this as the resolution of every child of God—"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way."

II. But now the text is interrupted. There is a break. There is a piece inlaid, as it were, of a different metal. It IS AN EJACULATION. "O, when will You come unto me?"

Many inspired writers, without diverging from their train of thought, interline their purpose with a prayer. There is an old proverb that, "Kneeling never spoils silk stockings." Prayer, to the preacher, is like provender to the horse. It strengthens and cheers him to go forward. As the scribe halts to mend his pen, or the mower to wet his scythe without loss of time, but rather with more facility to do his work, so you expedite, instead of hinder your business by stopping in the middle of it to offer a word of prayer. So here it is written, "O, when will You come unto me?"

And he means by that, "Lord, I want to be wise. Come and teach me. I want to behave myself wisely in a perfect way. Lord, come and sanctify me. I know not how to act till You instruct me. Open my lips that I may show forth Your praise. Guide my feet that I may run in Your commands. Keep my eyes that they look not upon sin. Hold back my hand from iniquity. When will You come unto me? I need the influence of Your grace to guide me in Your ways. Lord, come and teach me." Then, he meant further, "Lord, come and assist me. If there is any holiness to which I have not yet attained, come, Holy Spirit, lift me up unto it. If there is any sin which I have not conquered, O, come, You conquering Spirit of holiness, and overcome the evil. When will You come unto me? I am feeble, I can do nothing, but when I have Your mighty aid, I become strong and can perform all things. When will You come unto me?" It is a crying of his soul after divine teaching, divine direction, divine assistance. Nor less, I believe, is it a yearning after divine fellowship. You know, beloved, we never walk aright unless we walk with God. As I have said that holiness is wisdom, so let me say that communion is the mother of holiness. We must see God if we are to be like God. And if from day to day, we can be content without a word from the mouth of God, go to business without prayer, come home and go to our beds without seeking the face of our Father who is in heaven—then, to walk wisely is impossible. The neglect of prayer is a fatal flaw in any life. Communion with God is so essential and the disregard of it is such a folly, that it is simply ridiculous for the negligent man to talk about behaving himself wisely in a perfect way. Godliness is the soul of life. Get near to God—that is the thing. If we walk with Him, we walk in the light. But if we get away from Him, we walk in the darkness. It cannot be otherwise—and he that walks in the darkness will stumble. He may not know why he stumbles, but stumble he will. Only he who walks in the light will be able to pick his steps and verify the blessed fact that, "If we walk in the light as God is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." And thus we are enabled to walk wisely in a perfect way when the light comes to us.

"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O, when will You come unto me?" appears to me like an expression of holy awe, as if he said, "Lord, I had need behave myself aright for You are coming. I am a steward. You are my Master and You are coming to say, 'Give an account of your stewardship.' I am a servant. I need mind what I am about and how I acquit myself, for my Master can see me and my Master is on the way to say to me, 'What have you done with your talent? How have you laid it out?' When will You come unto me? It makes me feel a trembling in my soul and brings the tears into my eyes when I think of having to go before my Lord to give Him my account. Such a stewardship as mine will not easily be accounted for." I often envy George Fox, the Quaker, who, as he died, used these remarkable words, "I am clear! I am clear! I am

clear!" Doubtless, he meant that he was "clear of the blood of all men"; grand thing for a minister to be able to say! It will need all the grace that God can give a man to be able to say that. Now I ask you, fathers of families, if you were called upon at once, without further notice, to give in your account, can you tell the Lord you are clear about your children? Mothers, can you say you are clear about your boys and girls as to the way you have brought them up—as to your efforts for their souls? Masters, mistresses, are you clear about your servants? Young men, young women, are you clear about those that you work with and in whose houses you live? If the Lord were to say to you, "Come, now, I have entrusted you with a talent, how have you used it?"—are there not some of you who would have to go and take up that napkin in which you have hidden it away till it has grown rusty? "O, when will You come unto me?" seems to me a question full of solicitude. Lord, it may be You will come all of a sudden with surprise, for You have told me that in such an hour as I think not You will appear. Am I ready? Am I able to give a satisfactory account as to what I have done, as Your servant, in my general walk and conversation? Come, let me press these thoughts upon myself and then upon you. "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way," and well I may, since Your eye is on me, O my God, and Your day is coming when I must be put into the balances. And if I am found wanting, terrible must be my doom, for other eyes than mine shall search my heart, and other scales than I am able to use shall give the final test—and settle once and for all my endless state. God grant you to order your lives by His grace. You cannot do so without the power of the Holy Spirit. Oh, that whenever the Lord shall come you may meet Him with joy.

III. Now to our third point. After a parenthesis of devotion, he returns with more intense earnestness to his resolution. IN A MOST PRACTICAL MANNER HE CONCENTRATES HIS AIM—"I will walk within my house with a perfect heart."

With his house or household in view, for which he felt a deep responsibility and a yearning anxiety, he applies himself with a delicate consideration to the state of his own heart. "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." A very wise thing. Elisha healed the springs when the currents ran foul. It is of no use attempting to cleanse the courses when the fountain is corrupt. The thing is to heal the springs. The heart needs putting right. When the heart is right, then all will be right. If anywhere we show our hearts, it is at *home*. There we wear our hearts upon our sleeves. Outside, in the world, it is not safe to show too much of our heart. There are some of us who always say everything that is uppermost. We cannot help it. We have not learned to be guarded yet, and we have had our knuckles rapped pretty dreadfully, sometimes, for our unguardedness. No doubt there are many men of a reserved disposition who go through the world more easily than those of a more open-minded character. At home, everybody should be open-

hearted and transparent. Hence the necessity that, if we are to walk aright at home, the matter should begin with the heart being sound. If any man were to say to you, "I mean to be a good husband, a good father"—if any woman shall say, "I mean to be a good mistress," or "a good servant," that will not do unless you understand that the *heart* must, first of all, be altered. If the heart is right, other things will surely follow in their place. Now, the heart, if we are to walk rightly, must show itself in the house. "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." The heart must be perfect. And then we must show our heart in our *actions*. I think it is a miserable thing when a man does not open his heart in the sacred precincts of his own home. I can understand his restraining his feelings abroad, for he may be conscious that he is among rivals rather than friends—but when at home, that restraint is unbecoming. You know the sort of man whose hospitality is repulsive. I have been to see him at his house. I dare say you are welcome, but you would not think you were by the sinister greeting you receive when he shakes hands with you. His hand drops into your hand just like a dead fish. You talk with him and he is perfectly indifferent. When he is most friendly, there is not any freedom in his conversation. Well, now, see the way in which he treats his wife. No love. He is afraid of spoiling her. I recollect very well going to a house where I sat with the husband and I heard a gentle tap at the door. His Lordship said, "Come in." Who should enter but his wife? What a delightful picture of obedience! Knocking at a husband's door occurred to me as not the style of thing that most of us are accustomed to, or would like to see. I very soon perceived that she was the principal *servant* in the house. That was all he accounted her, and she had learned to form no higher estimate of herself. The man had not a heart. We talked about a son that was dead. Well, he seemed to regret that he was gone—he was a very good help to him in his business. That seemed to be the principal point about his deceased son—he was a great help to him in his business. No heart! No heart! No heart! No heart! But it is worse when you see a *woman* with no heart. And there are some. And if they are Christian people—well, I often wonder at the Lord's choice of any of us—but I certainly wonder when He chooses any of that sort. They do not seem to be the stuff out of which you can make a Christian. No feeling—hard "Gradgrindy" sort of people. They seem to think that people are just so many machine wheels to grind round at a regular rate. And the strong-minded woman simply puts a little oil, now and then, occasionally, as a trade, to the machinery and administers it just in that style. No heart! Now David did not mean to go through the world in this fashion. Oh, a house is all the better for having a heart inside it. And a man is a man—and he is more like God, when there is a heart inside his ribs. When he gets home, the children feel that father has got a heart. And as they climb his knees and smother him with kisses, they delight to know that he has a warm heart. And when he greets his dear relatives, especially

those that are part and parcel of himself, he has got a soul that goes beyond his own little self and is enlarged and inspires the whole of the family. Oh, give me heart, and that is what David meant when he said he would behave himself wisely. But when he was in his own house, he would walk with a perfect heart. He would be hearty in everything he did and said.

Well, now, having noticed those two things—that the heart must be right, and that the heart must be expressed—the next thing is that the conduct at home must be well regulated. "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." The Christian man at home should be scrupulous in all departments within his house. We may have different rooms there, but in whatever room we are, we should seek to walk before God with a perfect heart. Ah, dear friends, there are many professors that fail in this. I am not disposed to pry into your homes. I do not want to undertake the task. It would be a sad thing if it were part of a minister's duty to be peeping through your keyholes, seeing how you act. Still, we have reason to fear that some people, who pass current as saints abroad, behave themselves like devils at home. It used to be so and it is so, still, and you may depend upon it—the *man* is what he is *at home*. This is a simple but a crucial test of character. If a man does not make his family happy, and if his example is not that of holiness in the domestic circle, he may make what pretension of godliness he likes, but his religion is base, worthless, mischievous. The sooner he gets rid of such a profession, the better for himself, for then he may begin to know what he is and where he is, and seek the Lord in spirit and in truth. It is at home that the lack of true religion will do the most damage. If you are a hypocrite and go out into the world, you will soon be found out—and the people who observe you will not be much influenced by your example. They will come to the conclusion that you are what you are, and they will treat you as such, and that will be the end of it. But that will not be so with little Master Johnny, who sees his father's actions. He is not able to criticize, but he has a wonderful faculty for imitation. And, Mother, it is not likely that little Polly will begin to say, "Mother is inconsistent." No, she does not know that, but she will take it for granted that mother is right and her character will be fashioned upon your pattern—and you will be injuring her for life unless the grace of God wonderfully prevents it. Why, at home, to our children, especially when they are young, we are, as it were, little gods. They take their law from us and their conduct is shaped according to the pattern we set before them. Round the hearth, if anywhere, holiness ought to be conspicuous, for there, holiness is most beautiful, most useful, and most productive.

It is a blessed thing for some of us that we can look back upon a father's example and a mother's example with nothing but unalloyed gratitude to God for both. But there are others among you, who, in looking back, must say, "I thank God I was delivered from the evil influence to

which I was subjected as a child." Do not let your child ever have to say that of you, dear friend, but ask for grace that in your own house you may walk with a perfect heart. For surely, dear friends, if we are not living in our households as we ought to do, this, above all common faults and infirmities, is one of the most disparaging and condemnatory marks with which we can possibly be judged. In the world, we may be under some pressure, but at home, we are left free, for every man's house is his castle and if, inside his own castle, he does not walk before God, then he stands condemned by the depravity of his temper and his habits. Outside, men are checked and kept within decent bounds by the example and the observation of their fellow men, so that they are not altogether what they seem, but they are partly regulated by what they wish to appear. Even when they are in church, they are under some restraint—they are constrained to show some deference to the place and the assembly. But at home, they are altogether unshackled. They can think aloud, speak without premeditation, follow their own tastes, and gratify their natural inclinations. There, therefore, if anywhere, the man is what he is. Now you need not tell me what kind of appearance you will put on next Sunday morning. You need not tell me that. I would rather ask you to judge yourself by your deportment on Saturday night. I do not particularly ask you how you feel on Thursday night at this particular hour. How will you be at half-past nine? And how will you be tomorrow morning? What will you be to your servants, to your employers, to your children, to your neighbors? If God, by His infinite grace and the power of His Holy Spirit, helps you to walk with a perfect heart at such times and in such places, then will you be an honor to the church of God and you will have a blessing upon your own soul.

Now, the things that I have talked of seem to be very homely, but indeed, they are most important. I love to expound Christian doctrine. I love to open up the promises. This is all sweet work, but we must have the *precepts*. We shall never have a large increase to an unholy church, or, if we do, that increase will be a curse instead of a blessing. I believe that the greatest power in the world, next to the ministry of the Word of God, is, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the holy living of Christian families. Let us plant in this dark world garrisons of holy men and women with their children about them, and this will be a means whereby the world shall be conquered for Christ.

Ah, I may be addressing some who have no part or lot in true religion. It is just possible that they are at the heads of households, and yet they may have never considered this question about walking wisely. Permit me to suggest to you how necessary it is. I have known men who, though very ungodly themselves, have been shocked at the idea of their children growing up in worldliness and wretchedness. And I have, on the other hand, known persons converted late in life who never could forgive themselves when they looked upon their children who had grown up in sin. I

remember very well a poor woman who had received good under my ministry and found the Savior. She earned her living by washing. When I went into the house to see her, she hastily wiped her hands and as she greeted me, the tears were in her eyes when she spoke about her conversion, but she wrung her hands in bitterness, for she said, "I was left with six little children when my husband died. As a lonely widow I worked hard for them. I never had any help from anybody, but I brought them up myself and now my son is this, and my daughter is that. But," she said, "they are, every one of them, unconverted—every one of them. And after I was converted myself I found that I had lost the opportunity of influencing them. I never took my children to the house of God. My eldest boy, when I went to see him the other day, and asked him to go with me, said, 'No, no. You never took us when we were little and you need never expect us to go now.'" That was the trouble that bowed her down with heaviness when she was relieved of the former obligations to find them daily bread. Oh, fathers and mothers, if you are not converted early, you will live to regret, if God does save you at all, that you saw your youngsters grow up till they got beyond your influence and they grew up unsaved. You young persons who are just commencing life, I do charge you—perhaps God has sent you here that I may ring these counsels and cautions in your ears. Do pause, think, consider, look—and may God give you grace and sense enough to see that it needs wisdom to steer the boat through this voyage of life—and that wisdom only is to be had from heaven.

May you bend your knee at this very hour, and say, "Lord, give me Your grace. Give me a renewed heart. Give me Christ to be my Savior and help me to behave myself rightly in a perfect way till You shall bring me to see You in heaven in Your glory." God fulfill to you this petition, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—James 1.

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THE SURE TRIUMPH OF THE CRUCIFIED ONE
NO. 1231

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 25, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Behold, My servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at you, His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men: So shall He sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at Him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider."
Isaiah 52:13-15.

MODERN Jewish writers refuse to see the Messiah in this passage, but their predecessors were not so blind. The Targum and the ancient Rabbis interpreted it of the Messiah and indeed, all attempts to explain it apart from Him are perceptible failures. Christian commentators in all ages have seen the Lord Jesus here. How could they do otherwise? To whom else could the prophet have referred? If the Man of Nazareth, the Son of God, is not right visible in these three verses, they are dark as midnight itself. We do not hesitate for a moment in applying every word to our Lord Jesus Christ. Dear brethren, when our Lord ascended on high, He gave us this commission, "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Our duty is to obey that command, whether men will hear or whether they will not. The commission is unconditional and is not dependent upon our success. If up to this date, 1875, there had never been a solitary convert through Christian ministry. If the whole of the church of God had, until this time, labored in vain and the succession of saints had only been kept up by miracle, it would not affect our duty one iota. Our business is to preach the gospel, even to those who are driven to persecution thereby. We are to sow, whether a harvest follows or not. *Success* is with God—service belongs to us.

I believe, therefore, that true faith, when it is in a healthy condition, will enable us to go plodding on, carefully scattering the seed, even by the wayside and on stony places. Yet there is flesh about us all—and faith is not always unalloyed with sight—and consequently, we occasionally flag and almost faint if we do not see some present usefulness. This passage may cheer us if we fear that we have spent our strength for nothing, for such certainly was the condition of the church of God at the time when this passage was addressed to it. There is a break made, in our version between the 52nd and 53rd chapters, but no such break should have been made. And if we read straight on we shall see that these consoling words are meant for mourning workers. We hear even prophets saying, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm

of the Lord revealed?" Even the bravest of the prophets lamented that the offense of the cross hindered men from seeing the comeliness of the Messiah. All glorious as He was to the prophets, when they beheld His substitutionary griefs, He was not understood by the multitudes who only saw in Him a man smitten of God and afflicted, having no beauty that they should desire Him. To support them under circumstances so dispiriting, there comes in this comfortable word of our text in which the marred visage and disfigured form of the great servant of the Lord are fully recognized, and yet the voice of the Lord declares that the shame and contempt caused thereby will be temporary—and the ultimate result will be sure. The issue of the great scheme of redemption is by no means uncertain. His cause must prosper, His throne must be established, and the will of the Lord must be done. Let us brace ourselves up, this morning, with the delightful prospect of the predestinated triumph of the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

In handling our text we shall note, first, that in directing us to the Lord Jesus Christ, it dwells upon *the character of His dealings*—"My servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high." Then, secondly, it mentions *the stumbling block which lies in His way*, the great hindrance to the progress of His work—"Many were astonished at you; His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." Thirdly, we see in the verses before us *the certainty of the removal of this hindrance*—"He shall sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at Him." And, fourthly, *the manner of its accomplishment*, namely, by instruction in the gospel—"For that which had not been told them they shall see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider."

I. THE CHARACTER OF OUR LORD'S DEALINGS. He is called in the text, "*My servant*," a title as honorable as it is condescending. The Lord Jesus has undertaken, in infinite love, to become the servant of the Father for our sakes. And He is a servant like unto Moses, who was set over the Lord's house to manage the affairs of the dispensation. Jesus, though a Son and therefore Lord, has deigned to become the great servant of God under the present economy. He conducts the affairs of the household of God, and it is said in the text, and it is to that we have to draw attention—that *He deals prudently*. He, who took upon Him the form of a servant, acts as a wise servant in everything. And indeed, it could not be otherwise for, "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." This prudence was manifest in the days of His flesh, from His childhood among the doctors in the temple, on to His confession before Pontius Pilate. Our Lord was enthusiastic—there was a fire burning within Him which nothing could quench—He found His meat and drink in doing His Father's will. But that enthusiasm never carried Him into rashness, or forgetfulness of sound reason. He was as wise and prudent as the most cold-hearted calculator could have been. Our Savior was full of love and that love made Him frank and open-hearted. No frigid reserve kept Him at a distance from the people, or shrouded Him in a cloud of mystery. He was a man among men, transparent, childlike, "the holy

child Jesus." But for all that, He was ever prudent and "committed Himself unto no man, for He knew what was in man." Too many who aspire to be leaders of the people study policy, craft, and diplomacy—and think it necessary to use language as much for the concealment as for the declaration of their thoughts. Such men watch their own words till their very soul seems withered within them. The Friend of Sinners had not a fraction of that thing about Him and yet He was wiser and more prudent than if diplomacy had been His study from His youth up. You see His wisdom when He baffles His adversaries. They think to entangle Him in His speech, but He breaks their snares asunder as with a wave of our hand we sweep cobwebs from our path. You see His wisdom when He deals with His friends—He has many things to say to them, but He perceives that they cannot bear them—He, therefore, does not overload their intellects, lest undigested truth should breed mischief in their souls. Little by little, like the increasing brightness of the dawn, He lets light into their souls, lest their eyes should utterly fail before the brilliance thereof. He does not send them upon difficult errands at first—He reserves for their riper years and stronger days the sterner tasks and more heroic deeds of daring. As we see His career in the light of the four evangelists, it is distinguished for His prudence—and in that respect, "Never man spoke like this man."

He, who on earth became obedient unto death, has now gone *into glory*, but He is still over the house of God, conducting its affairs. *He still deals prudently*. Our fears lead us to judge that the affairs of Christ's kingdom are going amiss, but we may rest assured that all is well, for the Lord has put all things under the feet of Jesus and made Him to be Head over all things to His church. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in the hand of Jesus still. *We* err, but *He* does not. No, the very points in which we err are overruled by Him for the display of His unerring wisdom and consummate skill. The storms and tempests which surround the church serve only to illustrate the wisdom and power of our great Pilot. He has ultimate designs which are not apparent upon the surface, and these He never fails to accomplish.

Brethren, all along through the history of the church the dealings of the Lord Jesus with His people have been very remarkable. The wisdom in them is often deep and only discoverable by those who seek it out. And yet frequently it sparkles upon the surface like gold in certain lands across the sea. Note how the Lord has made His church learn truth by degrees and purified her, first of one error, and then of another. The church has fallen first into one folly and then into another, but her Lord has borne with her and delivered her. Full often He has allowed her to work her folly out so as to see its result. And by this process, He has stamped out the error effectually, so that it will never again gain power. At the present time, the gross folly of uniting with the State is being practically proved before the eyes of all men—and when it has come to its fullness; it will end, never to be revived again. We wonder, sometimes, why He allows this or that error to exist, and we ask how it can be that the church should be so despoiled of her purity and weakened in her

strength. We wonder that our Lord does not judge the evil and punish it at once, or that He does not raise up some strong voice to protest against it, and sending His Holy Spirit therewith, destroy the evil at once. I know He might, but there is prudence in the withholding of His power. The wise physician tolerates disease until it shall have reached the point at which he can grapple with it, so as to eradicate it from the system. So has the good Lord allowed some ills to fester in the midst of His church, that He may ultimately exterminate them. We wish to see great success following all forms of ministry. We would see our missionary societies prosperous to such a degree that a nation should be born in a day. But the Lord withholds success in a great measure and herein He is dealing prudently. He keeps us back from prosperity till we have learned that it does not, after all, arise out of our plans, schemes, resources and energies—He would strip us of pride—He would put us in such a condition that it would be safe to give us success and would be glorious to Himself also. Often has a church, like Israel of old, to suffer defeat till it discovers and destroys the Achan who troubles the camp. The church has been foiled and humbled till at last, in sheer despair, she has fallen upon her face in prayer and lifted up her heart to the strong for strength. And then her strength has returned and victory has waited on her banners. As rivers filter and purify in their running, so does the church, in her course, become pure through the manifold wisdom of her Lord.

Study the pages of ecclesiastical history and you will see how Jesus Christ has dealt wisely in the raising up of fitting men for all times. I could not suppose a better man for Luther's age than Luther, yet Luther alone would have been very incomplete for the full service needed had it not been for Calvin, whose calm intellect was the complement of Luther's fiery soul. You shall not find a better age for Wickliffe to have been born in than the time in which he shone forth as the morning star of the Reformation. God fits the man for the place and the place for the man. There is an hour for the voice and a voice for the hour.

Our Lord has done all things well, even unto this day, but now, perhaps, we are getting a little tired. It is near 2,000 years since He died and there has been a long of talk about its being the end of the 6,000 years since creation, and we murmur to each other that the great Sabbath must surely be very near. I am not much in love with this chronological theory, for I think we cannot be certain that we have not long ago passed beyond the 7,000 years. It is very questionable to me whether we do not altogether misunderstand the chronology of the Old Testament. Certainly nothing is more perplexing than the ancient Hebrew numbering. Still, so the many will have it, and possibly so it is. A portion of the church not only expects the Lord's second advent, but gets into a state of feverishness about the matter. Surely, they say, His delays have been very great—why are His chariots so long in coming? Ah, brethren, the Master knows best. It may please Him to finish up the present dispensation today. If so, He will doubtless deal prudently in so doing. But it may be that myriads of years are yet to elapse before His appearing—and if so, there will be wisdom in the delay. Let us leave the matter alone, for while

the general fact that He will come is clearly revealed in order to quicken our diligence—the details are veiled in mystery—since they would only gratify our curiosity. If I knew that our Lord would come this evening, I should preach just as I mean to preach. And if I knew He would come during this sermon, I would go on preaching until He did. Christian people ought not to be standing with their mouths open, gazing up into heaven and wondering what is going to happen—but they should abide with loins girt and lamps burning, ready for His appearing, whenever it may be. Go straight ahead upon the business your Lord has appointed you and you need be under no apprehension of being taken by surprise. On one occasion, I called to see one of our friends and I found her whitening the front steps. When she saw me she jumped up and blushingly said, "Oh dear, sir, I am sorry you caught me like this. I wish I had known you were coming." "My dear sister," I said, "I hope that is how the Lord will find me at His coming—doing my duty." I should like to be found whitening the steps when the Lord comes, if that were my duty. Steady perseverance in appointed service is far better than prophetical speculation, especially if such speculation leads us to self-conceit and idleness. We may rest assured that the future is safe, for Jesus will deal wisely and come at the right time. Therefore we may leave all matters in His hands. If the times are dark, it is right they should be. If the times are bright, it is right they should be. I, at least, cannot change the times and therefore, my duty is to do the work God has given me to do, whether the times are dark or bright. For all practical purposes, it is enough for us that infinite wisdom is at the helm of affairs. "My servant shall deal prudently."

Another translation of the passage is, "My servant shall have prosperous success." Let us append that meaning to the other. *Prosperity will grow out of our Lord's prudent dealings*. The pleasure of the Lord prospers in the hands of Jesus. The gospel will prosper in the thing which God has sent it. The decrees of God will be accomplished. His eternal purposes will be fulfilled. We may desire this or that and our wish may or may not be granted, but whatever the Lord has appointed, in His infinite wisdom to be done, will come to pass to the last jot and tittle. The blood of Jesus Christ will not miss of its foreseen result in reference to any individual under heaven—and no end that was designed in the eternal plan of redemption shall be left unaccomplished. All along the line, the Captain of our salvation will be victorious and in every point and detail of the entire business the will of the Lord shall be done—and all heaven and earth shall be filled with praise as they see that it is so.

In consequence of this, the text tells us the Lord shall be exalted and extolled. How well He deserves to be exalted and extolled for His matchless prudence! He cannot be esteemed too highly. At the present time, you will say the name of Christ is not honored. But wait awhile and He shall be very high. His name is, even now, more honored than in former days when it was the jest of the nations. The prudent plans which the Lord has adopted are surely working out the growth of His kingdom and will certainly result in bringing to the front His name, and person, and teach-

ing. Perhaps you think that certain doctrines are hindrances to the success of the gospel—you know not what you say. In the end, it shall be seen that every part of His teachings and procedure—and every act of His life, and all His government in providence—were so wisely ordered that, as a whole, they secured in the best and speediest manner the exalting and extolling of His holy name. The star of Jesus rises higher every hour. The twilight of Calvary brightens towards millennial day. He was despised and rejected of men, but now tens of thousands adore Him, and according to the omnipotent promise of the Father, to Him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord. The Spirit of God is at work glorifying Jesus and providence is bending all its forces to the same end. In heaven, Jesus is exalted and extolled. In His church, He is very high. And even in the world itself, His name is already a word of power and destined to be supreme in ages to come. Thus much, then, upon the character of Messiah's dealings.

II. Now, let us view THE STUMBLING BLOCK IN THE WAY OF OUR LORD. It is His cross, which to Jew and Greek is always a hindrance. As if the prophet saw Him in vision, he cries out, "As many were astonished at you, His visage was so marred more than any man and His form more than the sons of men." When He was here, His personal position and condition and appearance were very much against the spread of His kingdom. He was the son of a carpenter. He wore the smock frock of a peasant. He associated with publicans and sinners. Is He the Son of David? We looked for a great prince. We hoped for another Solomon. Is this He? Therefore, the Jews rejected the meek and lowly Prince of the house of David and alas, they persist in their rejection of His claims.

Today, He has risen from the grave and gone into glory, but the offense of the cross has not ceased, for upon His gospel there remains the image of His marred visage and therefore, men despise it. The preaching of the cross is foolishness to many. The main doctrine of the gospel concerns Jesus crucified—Jesus, the Son of God, put to an ignominious death, because, for our sakes, He was numbered with the transgressors and bore the sin of many. Men will tell you they could believe Christianity if it were not for the atonement, that is to say, if Jesus will come down from the cross, modern scoffers will believe in Him, just as the ancient ones tauntingly promised to do. But of the gospel we may say that the atoning blood is the pledge thereof, and if you leave out the substitutionary work of Christ from it, there is no gospel left. It is a body without a soul. This, then, seems to be the impediment to the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom—He, Himself, with His marred visage—and His gospel with a visage equally uncomely in the eyes of carnal men.

The practical part of the gospel is equally a stumbling block to ungodly men, for when men inquire what they must do to be saved, they are told that they must receive the gospel as little children, that they must repent of sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Very humbling precepts for human self-sufficiency! And after they are saved, if they inquire what they should do, the precepts are not those which commend themselves to proud, swaggering human nature—for they are such as these—"Be kind-

ly affectionate, one to another." "Forgiving one another and forbearing one another even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you." To the world which loves conquerors and blasts of trumpets, and wreaths of laurel, this kind of teaching has a marred visage and an uncomely form.

Then, what seems even more humbling, the Lord Jesus Christ, in His prudent dealing, not only brings before us an offensive gospel, because of the doctrine of atonement, and offensive in its practical precepts, but He sends this gospel among us by men who are neither great nor noble, nor even among the wise of this world. The proud say, "We would submit ourselves to men of master minds, but we cannot endure these foolish ones. Send us philosophers and orators combined. Let men overcome us by convincing arguments. Let them master us by words whose splendor shall dazzle our intellects." Instead of which, the Lord sends a man who talks humbly, plainly, and perhaps even coarsely. Very simple is what he says, "Believe and live. Christ, in your place, suffered for you. Trust Him." He says this and little more. Is not this the fool's gospel? Is it not worthy to be called the foolishness of preaching? Men do not like this. It is an offense to their dignity. They would hear Caesar, if he would officiate in his purple, but they cannot endure Peter preaching in his fisherman's coat. They will hear a pope in his sumptuous array, or a cardinal in his red hat. And they would not object to listen to a well-trained dialectician of the schools, or an orator from the forum. But they are indignant at the man who disdains the excellency of speech and styles the wisdom of this world folly. How can the gospel spread by such means? How, indeed, unless the Lord is with it, using human weakness to display the power of His grace?

Worse still, if there can be worse, the people who become converted and follow the Savior are generally of the poorer sort and lightly esteemed. "Have any of the rulers believed?" is still the question. With what scorn do your literary men speak of professed Christians! Have you ever seen the sneer upon the face of your "advanced thought" gentleman, and of the far-gone school of infidels, when they speak of the old women and the semi-idiots who listen to the pious platitudes of evangelical doctrines? They know how to despise us, if they know nothing else! But is such scorn worthy of men? It is only another version of the old sneer of the Pharisees when they said, "Do you hear what these say?" and pointed to the boys and the rabble who shouted, "Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." Contempt has always followed at the heels of Jesus and it always will till the day of His glory. If the great ones of the earth despise the Lord Jesus, on their own heads be their blood. To Him it is a glory rather than a shame that "the poor have the gospel preached to them." He is the people's Christ whom it was written of old—"I have exalted one chosen out of the people." He rejoices to be called a leader and commander of the people and He is glad that "the common people hear Him gladly." But here stands the head and front of the difficulty—the cross, which is the soul of Christianity—is also its stumbling block.

If any here are offended with Christ because of His cross, I beg them to dismiss the prejudice. Should it lead any man to doubt the Savior or withhold his heart from Him because He comes with a visage marred with sorrow? If He came to teach us to be unhappy and to prescribe to us rules for increasing misery, we might be excused if we shunned His teaching. But if He comes bearing the grief, Himself, that we may not bear it, and if those lines of agony were worked in His countenance because He carried our griefs and our sorrows, they ought to be to us the most attractive of all beauties. I reckon that the scar across the warrior's face, which he gained in defending his country, is no disfigurement to him—it is a beauty spot. If my brother had, in saving my life, lost an arm or received a hideous wound, he would be all the more beautiful in my esteem. Certainly I could not shun him on that account. The wounds of Jesus are precious jewels which should charm our eyes. They are eloquent mouths which should win our hearts. Be attracted by Him, all of you. Hide not your faces from Him. Look on Him and live and love. That crown of thorns has far more true glory about it than any crown of gold. Those hands pierced and nailed should be your delight to kiss. Before that once sorrowing person you should bow with joyful alacrity. Jesus, O marred One, your cross, instead of being a stumbling block to us is the glory of our faith.

That the gospel is spoken very plainly and that God blesses very simple people ought not to offend anybody. Ought it not, rather, to make us hopeful for the conversion of men because God may so largely bless commonplace instruments? Ought the conversion of the poor and the illiterate to be any offense to us? It shows a want of humanity. It looks as if pride had dried up the milk of human kindness in us, if we can grudge to those who have so little of this present world the priceless gifts of another.

III. THE CERTAINTY OF THE REMOVAL OF THIS STUMBLING BLOCK, and the spread of Christ's kingdom. As His face was marred, so surely, "shall He sprinkle many nations," by which we understand, first, that the doctrines of the gospel are to fall in a copious shower over all lands. Jesus shall, by His speech which drops as the dew and distils as the rain, sprinkle not the Jews only, but Gentile nations everywhere. Your brethren abhorred You, O Immanuel! They despised You, O Man of Nazareth! But all lands shall hear of You and feel You coming down like showers upon the mown grass. The dusky tribes afar off and the dwellers in the land of the setting sun shall hear Your doctrine and shall drink it in as the fleece of wool sucks up dew. You shall sprinkle many nations with Your gracious Word.

This sprinkling we must interpret according to the Mosaic ceremonies. Remember there was a sprinkling with blood, to set forth pardon of sin, and a sprinkling with water to set forth purification from the power of sin. Jesus Christ with—

"The water and the blood
From His riven side which flowed,"

has sprinkled not only many men, but many nations. And the day will come when all nations shall feel the blessed drops which are scattered from His hands and know them to be "of sin the double cure," cleansing transgressors both from its guilt and power.

Dr. Kitto explains the passage by an Oriental custom. He says that kings, when they invited their subjects to great festivals, would employ persons to sprinkle with perfume all who arrived as they passed the palace gate. I scarcely think that that is the meaning of the text, but at any rate, it supplies an illustration of it. Jesus invites men of all nations to come to the gospel feast—and as they enter, He casts upon them the sweet perfumes of His love and grace, so that they are fragrant before the Lord. There were no perfumes for You, O Jesus, upon Calvary. Vinegar and gall were all they offered You, but now, since You have gone to heaven, You provide perfumes for multitudes of the sons of men. And nations north and south and east and west are refreshed with the delicious showers of fragrance which, through the gospel, fall upon them.

The text, then, claims for Jesus Christ that the influence of His grace and the power of His work shall be extended over many nations and shall have power not over the common people only, but over their leaders and rulers. "The kings shall shut their mouths at Him." They shall have no word to say against Him. They shall be so subdued by the majesty of His power that they shall silently pay Him reverence and prostrate themselves before His throne. Kings, remember this. I am always glad to hear of noblemen being converted, though I am by no means inclined to flatter the great, or to think more of one man's soul than of another's. I am glad, however, to hear of the salvation of peers and princes, for it indicates the wide spread of the gospel, when all classes are affected by it, and when those who usually stand aloof yield themselves to its power. "Kings shall shut their mouths at Him." This promise has not been fulfilled yet. There are those who think that the Biblical prophecies are pretty nearly accomplished and that we are passing into a new dispensation. Well, I dare not dogmatize, but I dare question most of the talk I hear nowadays about the future. Scores of prophecies are not yet fulfilled. Kings have not yet shut their mouths at Him. They have mostly opened their mouths wide against Him and reviled and blasphemed Him and persecuted His saints. There must be brighter days to come for this poor world yet, when even princes shall humbly obey our Lord. The more I study the Bible, the more sure I am of two things which I cannot reconcile. First, that Christ will come at such an hour as men look not for Him and may come right now. And secondly, that the gospel is to be preached in all nations and that, "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord." I do not know which of the two things I am surest of—neither do I know how to reconcile them. But they are both in the Word, and in due time, they will be reconciled by history itself. Assuredly the day will come when the mightiest prince shall count it his highest honor to have his name enrolled as a member of the church of Christ. "Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him. All nations shall serve Him." The little handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains is yet to increase till the fruit

shall shake like Lebanon. "They shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know Him from the least to the greatest."

We look for this, and it will come. O thorn-crowned King of Calvary, kings shall be Your courtiers yet.

IV. Let us consider THE MANNER OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT. How will it come to pass? Will there be new machinery? Will the world be converted and the kings be made to shut their mouths by some new mode of operation? I do not think so. Will the saints take the sword one day? Will it be accomplished by that wonderful implement of civilization, a gunboat? Shall we convert the Africans by gunpowder? We have had a little trial of these carnal weapons and some admire the success, but they may live to regret it. The Prince of Peace bids us put the sword into its scabbard. His weapons, like His kingdom, are not carnal. The way which has been from the beginning of the dispensation will last to its close. I believe that this battle is to be fought out on the line upon which it began. It pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. To conceive that our Lord will end the present mode of warfare, as though it were admitted that evil could not be conquered by the use of instrumentality, is to my mind to do Him great dishonor. To me it is plain that, as He has chosen to magnify His power by using feeble instruments, He will continue to do so till the victory is won. He has never yet relinquished His work so as to give the enemy an opportunity of claiming a victory. To change weapons is to lay one's self open to the charge of being unable to conquer with those first used—but it is not so with our Lord. The very same grain of mustard, which is now so small, is yet to become a tree with far-spreading branches. The leaven is yet to leaven the whole lump. The last harvest will be the result of sowing by men and not by some miraculous agency. The dividing of the people, at the last, will be made from the contents of one and the same gospel dragnet, which we are bound to use till the heavens are no more.

According to this passage, these kings and nations are, first of all, to hear. "Faith comes by hearing." They are to hear something new. Well, brethren, if they are to hear, we must preach and teach so that our clear line of duty is to go on spreading the gospel. Jesus Christ would have His servants preach and teach the gospel. Are you doing it? Go on doing it, brother, in the power of the Holy Spirit, whatever comes. Have you not done it? Begin to do so now, as one of Christ's servants, and pray for divine help. Do you say you cannot do it? You can. You are hiding your talent in a napkin. Take it out, you unfaithful servant, lest your Lord come and judge you. But you cannot teach many? Who said you could? Teach one. Oh, but you cannot preach? Who said preach? Teach. Teach somehow. Cause the people to know the story of the cross. But you cannot teach kings, you say. Why need you? Teach servants and children—only do spread the gospel. The world is to be won to Christ, if it is ever won at all, by hearing the glad tidings of a dying Savior's love. And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach except they be are

sent? Christ sends you, for He says, "Let him that hears say, 'Come.'" In the power of that commission say at once—

"Now will I tell to sinners round
What a dear Savior I have found,
Point them to His redeeming blood
And say, Behold the way to God."

These people appear not only to have heard, but to have *seen*. "That which had not been told them shall they see." This seeing is not with their bodily eyes, but by the perceptions of their minds. Faith comes by the soul perceiving what the gospel means. We cannot believe in that which we do not perceive. Therefore, we must go on telling people the gospel till they see what the gospel is. Many men will never know the gospel till they have been told it a thousand times—and you must keep on telling it to them till you get to that thousandth time. "What do you mean by that?" you ask. I mean this, that it must be line upon line and precept upon precept almost to the exhaustion of patience. It must be a mother's prayers, a teacher's anxieties, providences, sicknesses, twitches of conscience, ministries of all sorts, and much pleading. And it is only at the last stroke that the Word will be achieved, though all the other efforts will have contributed towards it. Go on, dear brother, go on and teach Jesus Christ till the people see Him. That sight will come all of a sudden. How many times have I heard the young convert say, "I knew all about this before, sir. I have heard it many times, but I could not see it. Now I do see it." Oh, how it makes a man shut his mouth at Christ in humble silence, when he perceives, at last, that His marred visage and suffering form were tokens of divine love—and that by such sorrows sin is purged away. Would to God you all saw Him now.

After they had seen, it appears from the text that they *considered*. "That which they had not heard shall they consider." This is how men are saved—they hear the gospel, they catch the meaning of it, and then they consider it. Let us pray, dear friends, that God would set unconverted people considering. If we can but get them to think, we have great hopes of them. If any of you, here, have never yielded to Jesus Christ, I would ask you to hear or read about Him. Spend this afternoon in carefully reading one of the gospels. Turn to Matthew, or Mark, or Luke, or John and read the story of His passion and ask God to let you see what it all means. And when you do see it, turn it all over in your minds. Think of it. Think how wonderful it is that God should become man to suffer in your place. See if it be reasonable to disbelieve it or right to refuse to love the Savior. There are a thousand reasons why you should rush into His arms and say, "Incarnate Deity, how can I resist You? Bleeding Omnipotence, how dare I doubt You? Immortal love, crucified for my sins, I yield myself to You! I would be Your servant forever."

It is clear that those people, when they had seen and considered silently, accepted the Lord as their Lord, for they shut their mouths at Him. They ceased all opposition. They quietly resigned wills and paid allegiance to the great King of kings. Brothers and Sisters, we want to see this done for Christ now by hundreds here. There is a great religious stir, just now, and we desire that this church, and all the churches abroad,

should use the favorable breeze. You know how, in harvest time, the farmer gets all the men he can to work and they toil on through long hours. I have seen them working briskly beneath the bright moonlight to get the wheat in. This is our harvest time and we must get our sheaves in. The Lord has much corn and it needs to be garnered. I pray you make long hours and work hard for Jesus. Let the subject expounded this morning inspire you therein. The success of the gospel is in no jeopardy whatever. Jesus must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. If the devil can persuade you that Christ is going to give up the war, or is going to fight it out on another line and dispense with your efforts, you will soon grow idle. You will find an excuse for laziness in some supposed conversion of the world by miracle, or some other wonderful affair. You will say the Lord is coming and the war will all be over at once, so there is no need of your fighting it out now. Do not believe it. Our Commander is able to fight it through on this line—in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, by the power of the Eternal Spirit, we are bound to keep right on till this world yields before God. You remember the American general who, when the nation was eager for speedy victory, said he did not know when that would come, but that he would keep on pegging away? That is what we are bound to do—to keep on "pegging away." No gunner may leave his gun, no subordinate may disperse his band, no officer may suggest a retreat. Brethren, Popery must fall. Mohammedanism must come down. All the idol gods must be broken and cast to the moles and to the bats. It looks like a task too gigantic, but the bare arm of God—only think of that—His sleeve rolled up, omnipotence itself made bare—what cannot it accomplish? Stand back, devils! When God's bare arm comes into the fight, you will all run like dogs, for you know your Master. Stand back, heresies and schisms, evils and delusions. You will all disappear, for the Christ of God is mightier than you. Oh, believe it. Do not be downhearted and dispirited. Do not run to new schemes and fancies and interpretations of prophecy. Go and preach Jesus Christ unto all the nations. Go and spread abroad the Savior's blessed name, for He is the world's only hope. The cross is the banner of our victory. God help us to look to it ourselves and then to hold it up before the eyes of others till our Lord shall come upon His throne. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 53.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—72, 418, 302.

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SOLOMON'S PLEA
NO. 1232

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 2, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For You did separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be Your inheritance"
1 Kings 8:53.

ISRAEL was a type of the church of God. The apostle, in the epistle to the Romans, clearly shows that Abraham was the father, not of the circumcision only, but of all those who walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham, and that the promise that he should be heir of the world was not to Abraham or his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For the covenanted inheritance was not to be given according to descent through the flesh, else would the inheritance have fallen to Ishmael, but the peculiar blessings which God promised to Abraham are the heritage of those who are born after the Spirit, according to the promise, even as Isaac was. Abraham, himself, believed, and his faith was counted to him for righteousness, and all those who possess faith are the true children of "the father of the faithful." We may, therefore, without any violence, apply what is said of ancient Israel to the present people of God. The promises which were made to the great patriarch had an eye to us, "As it is written, I have made you a father of many nations," and, "The promise is sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham" (Rom 4:16, 17). "The children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Rom 9:8), and of them the children of the flesh, namely, the Jews, are but a type. We shall not err, then, in applying this prayer of Solomon to the people of God at the present time.

It is worthy of remark concerning this prayer that it is as full and comprehensive as if it were meant to be the summary of all future prayers offered in the temple. One is struck, moreover, with the fact that the language is far from new and is full of quotations from the Pentateuch, some of which are almost word for word, while the sense of the whole may be found in those memorable passages in Leviticus and Deuteronomy in which the Lord threatened His people that if they were untrue to Him, He would visit them with heavy chastisements. And, in which He also added that if they turned to Him with sincere repentance and confessed their iniquities, He would smile upon them again and deliver them. Solomon was certainly able to have found words of his own, for the royal preacher was wise and sought out acceptable words. Yet he preferred the words of the Holy Spirit to his own. In prayer, there is a peculiar sweetness in being able to bring before God not only His own meaning, but His own words. "Remember the word unto Your servant upon which You have caused me to hope." No language has such a mystic

charm and solemn power about it as that employed by the Holy Spirit. "How sweet are Your words unto my taste. Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" When we spread the very Words of the Lord before Him, our mind is conscious of great power in asking—and much assurance of receiving. The expressions by which the Spirit teaches us are very comely when we return them to Him in supplication.

By the illumination of the Spirit of God much more is to be seen in Solomon's prayer than may be apparent upon the surface. The chief point to which I shall call your attention at this time will be its concluding plea which he repeats in various forms, saying, "For they are Your people and Your inheritance, which You brought forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron." And again, in the words of the text, "For You did separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be Your inheritance, as You spoke by the hand of Moses, Your servant, when You brought our fathers out of Egypt." The Lord's choice of Israel, His past mercies towards the elect people, and His peculiar relationship to them above all other nations—these were the pleas which the suppliant son of David laid before the covenant God.

Three things, then, this morning. The first is *the fact*, "You have separated them from among all people." The second is *the design*, "to be Your inheritance." And the third is *the plea*, which is fitly based thereon. We shall try to work out the plea in reference to the various petitions of Solomon's prayer, for they comprehend most, if not all, of the trials of the godly.

I. First, here is THE FACT. "You did separate them from among all the people of the earth." The historical books of Scripture show that this was emphatically true of Abraham and his descendants. Balaam spoke the truth when he said, "Lo, the people shall dwell *alone*, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." Israel never prospered when it forgot its separateness, for the promise was, "Israel then shall dwell in safety *alone*." When they followed the customs of their neighbors, they had bitter cause for lamentation. But all things went well when they remembered how the Lord had said, "You shall be holy unto Me, for I, the Lord, am holy; and have severed you from other people that you should be Mine." Israel's safety and glory lay in being distinct from all other people—and that truth holds good concerning the church of God at this day, for we, also, are not of this world. In the human race, there are many divisions—nationalities, races and the like—but these are only like the marks of a plow upon the surface of a field, they do not divide the estate. There is a far deeper and more lasting division which God Himself has made. All around us is the world's wide wilderness and yonder is the spot enclosed by grace which the Lord of all has set apart to be His garden. Before us lies the great and troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. But we also see the rock on which He has built His church, which God has settled and made to stand fast by His eternal power. Gross darkness covers the earth, for the whole world lies in the wicked one. But in the land of Goshen there is light, for upon those that fear His name the Sun of Righteousness has arisen.

This separation of the world into two races was predicted when our first parents fell. At the gates of the Garden of Eden, the voice of the Lord spoke concerning the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, between whom an enmity was to be placed. From that day until this, the serpent's seed has continued in direct lineal descent and, blessed be God, the seed of the woman has not failed from off the face of the earth, for God's infinite grace has forever more raised up children in the family of grace. The two lines of Cain and Seth, of Ham and Shem, of Ishmael and Isaac, of Esau and Jacob are very visible from the first hour of history until now.

There is a separation, then. Let us speak of it. That separation *commenced in the eternal purpose of God*. Before the earth was, He had set apart unto Himself a people whom He looked upon in the glass of His foreknowledge and viewed with infinite affection. "Moreover whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." Think not that God's children are born into His family by chance, for, when they are born-again, they do but receive "that eternal life which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Conceive not that the newly converted ones are strangers to Him—He has known them long before they knew themselves. And He has shed abroad upon them "that great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." We may say of the mystical body of Christ that in the Lord's book all His members were written which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. Long before He had made the world in which men should dwell, He had ordained a place for His people and the arrangements of providence were made with an eye to them, for Moses says, "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people. Jacob is the lot of His inheritance."

This first act of separation was followed up, or I might say, accompanied, by a distinct act of grace in which *the chosen were given over to the Lord Jesus Christ*. "Yours they were," says Jesus, "and You gave them to Me." He speaks of as many as His Father gave Him—these were to be members of Christ's body, they were to make up His bride, the Lamb's wife—they were to be His brethren and He the firstborn. They were to be taken under a federal headship of which He should be the second Adam. "He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." Oh, what a blessing this is to be the chosen of God and given to the Lord Jesus—to have one's name written in the Lamb's book of life—that book in which the Lamb's name stands first and is followed by the names of all whom He has redeemed with His precious blood. Oh, bliss eternal and boundless, to know by assurance of faith that you belong to those who are set apart unto God, and are one with Jesus.

So far the separation is hidden from us, but what is hidden in the purpose, in due time develops itself into the event, for all the people of God are at the proper moment *called out by effectual calling*, and in this way they are separated from among the people of the world. They hear a

voice which others hear not. Their eyes are opened to see what others perceive not. Drawn by cords which others do not feel, they yield to those bands of love which others resist. With full consent, their will being sweetly influenced, they follow as they are drawn. Like Abraham, they go forth from the country of their birth to seek a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. The Most High has called them to come forth and be sojourners with Him, and they come. Do you not remember, brethren, when first the sacred voice sounded in your inner ears? It said, "You are in a far country, My child. You are poor and hungry. You are sick and faint. You are feeding swine. You are disgraced and dishonored. Come back to your Father's house." Well do I remember how that voice charmed me to consideration, to humiliation, to confession, and to resolve until my heart cried out, "I will arise and go unto my Father." Did not Jesus say, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me"? And did He not say to others, "You believe not because you are not of My sheep"? Here begins the separation which is visible and manifest. Grace works and calls the chosen out of nature's lost estate. At the call of the Almighty Spirit, dead souls arise to divine life and forsake the tombs among which they wandered. Lepers find their flesh returning to its former health and quit the lazar house in which they dwelt. And rebels, flinging down their weapons, sue for peace and become loyal subjects of their gracious King. Do you know, beloved, what this means? It is what we call *conversion*. It is a wonderful phenomenon—who shall understand it? Let no man dare to ridicule it. There is a mock conversion which arises from a little feverish feeling which turns cold when the fit is over—but this is no evidence that there are no true conversions. Real conversion by the Holy Spirit is as distinct and radical a change as though an old man were placed in a mill and ground young again. No, it is something more than that would be for, "Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." The regenerate are dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God by Jesus Christ. In them has been performed a deed of the same power which worked in Christ when He was raised from the dead—and this has most effectually put a difference between them and the rest of mankind.

Believers become separate from the hour of their conversion by *possessing a new nature*. Do not think I am too bold when I say that the distinction between the child of God and the carnal man is as great as the difference between a man and a beast. As man possesses an intellectual life which is denied to the beast, so the regenerate are endowed with a third and loftier principle called the spirit, which lifts them into a higher sphere of existence. The most moral and most educated of unregenerate men are still dead as to spiritual things—and they must remain so till the new life is implanted in them. Those who have been born again have received the living and incorruptible seed which abides forever. They have, in the words of the apostle, been "made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust." This makes a wonderful distinction between them and the rest of mankind. A man is separate from an ox or a sheep by every instinct of his na-

ture—there is no mistaking the one for the other. True, there are parts of manhood which have affinity with the animal, but still the possession of a mind creates tastes, desires, emotions, joys, sorrows, cravings, and motives with which the animal cannot intermeddle. The Christian man is endowed with a nature above that of other men and is conscious of a life with which they cannot sympathize. Dear hearer, do you know anything of this deep, vital, radical, essential distinction from the world? You must know it, or you cannot belong to Christ, for He says of His disciples, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

The separateness of the believer comes out in his life. We shall do well to call to mind that the Jews were remarkably separated from the Gentiles by the ordinances and commandments which the Lord gave them. If they sat down to eat, they could not mingle with the heathen, for they were discriminating in their food—the Lord had said to them, "You shall, therefore, put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean food and clean: and you shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creeps on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean." If the Jew went out to fish, some of the fish were without scales and fins—and these were unclean to him—and the Jewish fisherman was thus distinct from the Gentile. Or, if he became a fowler, some of the birds which might be taken were unclean, and so the Israelite was detected again. Not alone in his food, but in his dress, also, he was a marked man, for the Lord had commanded, "Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribbon of blue: and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that you may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them." It did not matter where he was, whether he ate, drank, slept, walked, rode—there was such a distinction about the man, that, with a little observation, you could safely say, "That man is an Israelite." Even thus should it be with the Lord's people. I do not mean that we are to use cant phrases, or set up distinctive trademarks as certain of the sects are doing. Behold how broad they make their phylacteries. One sort can do nothing without the "sign of the cross," and another cannot be happy except they exhibit the orthodox formula—"*The gospel of the grace of God will be preached here, God willing*." How readily does the simplest worship fix itself down to form and become as ritualistic without rituals as others with a superabundance of ceremonies. A broad brimmed hat and a collarless coat were once brave protests against wide-spread folly, and may be well enough, even now, if worn in a right spirit. But still the distinction between saint and sinner can never lie in beaver and broadcloth, nor can it be revealed by mere peculiarities of speech—it needs other and more important modes of manifestation. We do not believe the Lord would have us become unnatural. The grace of God has left us men and intends us to be men, though it has quickened us with a higher life and actuated us with nobler motives. Not John the Baptist in the wilderness, but Jesus among men, is the example of our lives. We are to be in the world but not of it.

Grave distinctions are to mark us. A worldling loves himself—the Christian loves his God. The worldling seeks gain for self—the Christian seeks glory for God. The worldling lives to bless himself—the Christian lives to bless his age. If the love of God is in a man, he will, in motive and spirit, differ as much from the ungodly as light from darkness—and in his life you will see the difference with the naked eye. The saints are a peculiar people and this is their main peculiarity—they are zealous for good works.

Dear brethren, it is to be feared that many of us are not separated enough from the world. God intends the difference to be very marked. He would have the line between the church and the world drawn very clearly. I could wish to obliterate forever the unhappy and artificial distinction which is constantly made between sacred and secular, for a world of mischief has come out of it. The truth is that a real Christian may be known by this—that to him *everything* secular is *sacred* and the most common matters are holiness unto the Lord. I do not believe in the religion which only lifts its head above water on Sunday and confines itself to praying and preaching and carrying hymn books about. We must have a religion which gives a true yard when it is measuring its calico, a religion which weighs a true pound when it is dealing out shop goods, a religion which scorns to puff and lie, and take advantage of a gullible public, a religion which is true, upright, chaste, kind, and unselfish. Give me a man who would not lie if the whole earth or heaven itself were to be won thereby. We need among professed Christians a high morality—no, far more—we need unsullied holiness. O, Holy Spirit, work it in all of us! As we have often said, holiness means wholeness of character in contradistinction to the cultivation of some few virtues and the neglect of others. Oh that we were like the Lord in this—that we loved only that which is right and abhorred that which is evil, that we kept along the straight and narrow path and could not be decoyed from it, fearing not the frown of man nor courting his smile, but resolved, as God lives in us, that we will live in our daily actions according to His will. This would make Christians to be indeed a separated people and this is precisely what their God would have them to be.

There shall be *a final separation,* by-and-by, when the wheat shall be gathered into the garner and the tares cast into the oven—when the great Shepherd shall come and set His sheep on the right hand and the goats on the left. Oh, in that day of final separation, may we be found among those of whom He has said, "They shall be Mine in the day when I make up My jewels."

II. Now, secondly and briefly, as to THE DESIGN. What has the Lord aimed at by separating His people from among men? The text tells us, "*to be Your inheritance*." God has made a choice of a people who are to be called, "the Lord's portion." They are to be "the lot of His inheritance," by which is meant *that He would have a peculiar interest in them*. The entire world belongs to God—"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein," yet out of the mass He has chosen His own beloved, of whom He says, "You, only, have I known of all the

nations of the earth." The Queen of England may traverse the whole of these islands and say, "All this is mine," but yet there are spots which are, in a deeper sense, her own inheritance. Windsor is the home of her ancestors and Balmoral and Osborne are also hers, as Blair Athol and Ventnor are not. Jehovah claims all men as His—"All souls are Mine, says the Lord," but He singles out some and says, "I know whom I have chosen." "It has pleased the Lord to make you His people." "Blessed is the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance."

A man, when he takes anything to be his inheritance, expects to have it *used for his own purposes*. If he has inherited a farm, he looks to receive the rents of it, or if he tills the ground himself, he rightfully considers that the crops belong to him. So, my brethren, if we are the Lord's *inheritance;* all that we are capable of producing belongs to Him, and He looks to have it. To Him every power, every faculty, every passion, every ability, yes, even life itself, belongs to Him. All the clusters of our vine are His and His each ear of our nature's harvest. We are vessels unto honor, reserved only for His use. We are His servants whose sole and only business it is to wait upon Him. We dare not look upon ourselves as our own, or as belonging unto others, for we are bought with a price. And therefore, it is but reasonable that we serve the Lord in our bodies and our spirits, which are His.

A man will generally *take up his abode* in the spot which he has selected to be especially his own. "For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation. This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." "I will dwell in them, and I will walk in them," says the Lord. Blessed is that man with whom Jehovah deigns to dwell. Will He, in very deed, dwell upon earth? He will, for He has said, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My Word."

In a man's inheritance *he takes his delight*, and oh, we mention it with joyful awe—Jehovah takes delight in His people. "The Lord your God, in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." It is said of Him who is the incarnate wisdom, "My delights were with the sons of men." So does He love us that He rejoices over us—and when we know that His joy is fulfilled in us, then our joy is full. Oh, brethren, see the honor which is put upon you by being made the delight of the Lord.

When a man takes a portion to be his inheritance, he means *never to give it up*. A Jew never yielded his inheritance. Poor Naboth had a little vineyard and Ahab wanted it, and therefore he said—"I will give you the worth of it in money, or I will give you a better vineyard." "No," said Naboth, "the Lord forbid it that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto you." And he died sooner than alienate his heritage. Beloved, *you* are the inheritance of God. You are the Lord's own portion. Sooner than give you up, the Only-begotten shed His heart's blood. You are His and He will not lose you. "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?"

Now, before I go further, I want to ask, have we realized our separated condition and our being wholly the Lord's? Certain regiments in the army count it a great honor to be called the Queen's Own. Oh, brethren, what an honor to be God's own, to be Jesus Christ's own. I would like to be the branded slave of Christ, like Paul, who, when he looked upon the scars which commemorated his sufferings said, "Let no man trouble me. I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," as if these were the brands never to be erased which marked him forever as belonging to the crucified Savior. If you and I belong to Jesus, let us never be false to Him. Let us never be ashamed of His service, nor negligent in it. Such an honor as we possess must not be trifled with. What manner of persons ought we to be? Brother, are you living for God? May I press the question home upon you? You profess to have been born into His family, are you seeking to glorify God as the main object of life? You may have other objects, but they must be secondary to this. This must eat you up. It must be like fire in your bones. You must feel, "For me to live is Christ." An old divine said, "I desire to eat, drink and sleep eternal life." Let us be wholly consecrated, for the Lord's portion must not be spoiled. The King's private garden must not be trod under the stranger's foot. His bride must not be for others. Brethren, you cannot but joyfully confess that you are the Lord's. Yes, you delight to have it so and desire to make the Lord's possession of you more and more manifest—go on unto perfection. There is no happiness comparable to a complete submergence of self into the glory of God. This is the nearest approach to heaven this side of the grave. Oh, to be reserved for the Lord, hedged round about, shut up and enclosed for Jesus, and for Him alone.

III. Thirdly, the subject before us furnishes us with A PLEA. If you have realized that you are separated to belong to the Lord, this is a plea—and the plea applies in prayer to all your trials. As time would fail me, I shall not read all the words of Solomon, but I will ask you to notice that from the 31st verse, he pleads for any who may have a case pending in judgment. It happens that righteous men are *falsely accused.* Solomon asks that God would decide the case and give forth His sentence and establish the right. Now, brethren and sisters, perhaps some of you are under the peculiarly severe trial of being misunderstood, misrepresented, and misjudged. You have not been guilty of that which is laid at your door. You loathe from your very heart the evil which is attributed to you. Now, if you are the Lord's own, you may go to Him with this argument—your Savior has put it into your mouth—"And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him?" Be not very sorely troubled when men falsely speak evil against you, for they so persecuted the prophets that were before you. Your reputation may be dead and buried, but, if you have not killed it by your own conduct, it will have a resurrection. And when it rises, again, it will be much more fair and beautiful than it was before. "Light sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Do not believe that the good man's sun has set, for it is written, "Your righteousness shall come forth as the light, and your judgment as the noon-day." Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him,

for He will do you justice in due time, for you are His own, and He will not forget you. I think this is good pleading—surely God will defend His own.

Then, Solomon goes on to speak, at verse 33, of those who had suffered *defeat*, and there may be some present who have passed through this experience. "When Your people Israel are defeated before the enemy, because they have sinned against You, and shall turn to You, and pray and make supplication to You, then hear You in heaven." He speaks of, "Your people Israel," so that it seems a man may be a true Israelite and yet be smitten by the foe. Perhaps you have been struggling against an error and the advocate of that error is cleverer in the use of his weapons than you are, and has gained an apparent advantage over you. Fear not, dear brother, if you are God's servant, you shall have victory yet. Perhaps some failing in your spirit while pleading for the truth has baffled you. Go to God and confess it, and then return to the war. God will help you. Perhaps you have been struggling against some besetting sin and as yet you fear you have been overcome. Say unto the dragon, "I shall yet smite you, Rahab. Were you not wounded at the Red Sea? Behold, the Lord will yet enable me to cut you in pieces. Rejoice not over me, O my enemy, though I fall, yet shall I rise again." Oh you people of God, who have been defeated by Satan in your attempts to teach the infidel, the scoffer, or the ritualist—go to the strong for strength—and cry unto the Lord, "Am I not Your own servant? Did I not do this for Your cause? Did I not seek Your honor?" And assuredly you shall have an answer of peace and you shall yet conquer.

Solomon then proceeded to speak of *barrenness* and the absence of the dew and the rain, a fearful calamity in Judea, for if the rain did not fall, there could be no gladsome weeks of harvest. At times, brethren, we, also, are without the heavenly rain—God's Spirit is withheld and our hearts become dry as the desert sand. Do any of you suffer from spiritual drought this morning? Do you feel as if you had no sap left in you? Those of us who search our own hearts, experience seasons when we can scarcely find a trace of grace, except that we do long after grace and do certainly rest in Jesus Christ, if we rest anywhere. I do believe that even those of God's children who live nearest to Him sometimes undergo spiritual drought. They cry unto God for help, but help does not immediately come. At such times, they may come each one with the plea, "Save me, O Lord, for I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid. You have loosed my bonds. I am Yours, quicken me. You bid dew fall on the grass and You give each blade of grass its own drop. And yet the grass cannot pray as You have taught my soul to do. Come, Lord, give me the dew for which You have made me cry with eagerness of desire. O, by the desire which You could not have created in order to tantalize me, I pray You, hear me and let Your Spirit come upon me." This is good pleading. "If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." You ask of a father and he gives to you as his child. You may ask peculiar gifts because you stand in a peculiar relationship.

Brother, do you belong to some decaying church? Do you come up here, today, to be refreshed, and are you saying, "Our church is very dry and barren." Go and plead with the Lord and say, "This is Your church, Lord, and though the members have grown very slothful and seem to be indifferent about sinners, they are still Your people, therefore, look upon them and revive them again. Will You not visit us again, for we are Your people? Revive us, we pray You, and send upon us the showers in their season."

Solomon further uses this plea in connection with *chastisements*, giving a long list of them—"If there is pestilence, blasphemy, mildew, locusts, caterpillars" and the like." Beloved, you may be under some chastisement, today, on account of sin. "What son is there whom his father chastises not?" Oh how some of us have had to learn the meaning of those words, but blessed be God, we have not had to ponder over that other dreadful verse, "If you are without chastisement whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards and not sons." Know you not what the smarting rod means? At such times, when the rod falls again and again, it is well to turn your eyes upward and say, "Father, am I not Your child? Are You sitting as a judge? Will You smite me with the blows of a cruel one, as though You hate me? My God, it cannot be for I am Your own—

'Gently, gently lay Your rod
On my sinful head O God;
Stay Your wrath, in mercy stay,
Lest I sink beneath its sway.'

"I am Yours, You know I am. Have compassion on the offspring of Your own eternal love. Look down with favor on me, whose name is sculptured on the heart of Jesus, The Well-beloved. Oh, do not crush me, do not utterly destroy me. Truly, I deserve Your utmost wrath, but by Your ancient affection when You did appear of old unto me and say, 'Lo, I have loved you with an everlasting love,' put up Your rod, and restore unto me the joy of Your salvation." I am not telling you, now, what I do not know. How many times I have pleaded just like that with God. And sometimes I have even made bold to say to Him, when pain was sharp and the mind was weary, "I would not thus chastise *my* child, and oh, my Father, will You be a less tender Father toward me than I am?" Being bold like this, I have often obtained an answer of peace from His hands, and even felt physical pain relieved, while spiritual distress has been swept away. This is Solomon's argument—"Are they not Your people? Have You not separated them? Be not angry very sore with Your inheritance."

This is equally good pleading if we come to the next point—which is *warfare*, for Solomon says, "If Your people go out to battle against the enemy, where ever You shall send them." Brethren, our life is warfare. There is a convict within and there is a warfare to be carried on without—at this very hour, we hear the trumpet sounding for an earnest assault upon the iniquities of London—and if we wish to plead for a blessing, this may serve us—"Lord, are we not Your people? Is not this Your gospel? Is not Jesus Christ Your Son? Is not this Your cause? For if it is, then, O Lord, go forth with us. If we are mistaken and the gospel is not

Your truth, and if we are not Your servants, then we wish that our cause should sink, for we would not fight against You. If we are Yours, oh remember us and now, even now, send prosperity for Jesus' sake." You may plead thus, and you shall be heard.

Again, Solomon prayed for any, who through their sins, were carried into *captivity*. Some here may be in that state. Brother, you were once a member of this church, but you have been put away for your unseemly conduct. Sister, you once walked in the light of God's countenance, but it is many a day since you have seen the gleaming of the Savior's face, for you have behaved strangely towards your best Beloved. Well, now, notwithstanding all this, your Lord says, "Return, you backsliding children." It is a wonderful thing, that even if you have been a prodigal, and have spent your living with harlots, yet if you are His child you may call Him, "Father." Did not the prodigal say, "Father, I have sinned"? There is good pleading in this fact, for you are not disowned, even by your sin. If you are a child of God, you *are* a child of God and ever must be, for it is not possible that the relationship of son-ship should come to an end. Alas, our children may bring grave dishonor upon us and we may cry over them, "O Absalom, my son, my son," but even Absalom is still acknowledged as David's son, and must be. And, therefore, O backslider, you are still the Lord's child. Come back, I pray you, and ask to be delivered from your captivity.

I have but one thing more to say. I hear a mourner cry, "This sermon is very consolatory for the people of God, but what about us? Some of us do not belong to the separated ones. Are you going to send us away without a word?" Oh no. What did Solomon say in his prayer? His prayer was all for Israel, was it not? Well, yes, but I will read you a little piece of it. Just listen. See if it suits you. "Moreover concerning a stranger that is not of Your people Israel, but comes out of a far country for Your name's sake. For they shall hear of Your great name and of Your strong hand, and of Your stretched out arm. When he shall come and pray toward this house, hear You in heaven, Your dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calls to You for: that all people of the earth may know Your name, to fear You, as do Your people Israel."

That is a prayer for strangers. Stranger, where are you? Stranger to yourself, stranger to Christ and a stranger to His people—have you come here this morning among the people of God? What has brought you? Have you come from a far country? Are you far off from God by wicked works? Is there something in your breast which makes you long to draw near? Stranger, have you heard that Christ has been saving thousands of late, and do you want Him to save you? Stranger, have you a relative who has lately passed from death to life, and do you want to know that saving change yourself? Stranger, has your mother gone to heaven? Has some beloved child been borne away to sing like a seraph beyond the stars? And do these things tempt *you* to desire to know more about the great Redeemer? You are welcome. Oh, so welcome, not to this Tabernacle merely, but to Jesus and to His heart of love! Stranger, utter your heart's desire. Ask of the Lord great things, for whatever you shall ask believing-

ly, you shall receive. The Queen of Sheba was not sent away empty-handed by Solomon, and you shall not be sent away hungry by Jesus Christ the Lord. Breathe your prayer now. Do you want pardon? Ask for it now. Would you be saved? Pray for salvation now, for the Lord will certainly hear you. Let this be the plea, the plea which Solomon gives us—that God's name may be known and glorified to the very ends of the earth. For if the Lord will but save you, I guarantee you, you will never let Him hear the last of it, for you will tell of His grace to everybody as long as you live. The Lord will bless you if you plead His grace in Christ Jesus. Say, "Lord, there is no reason why I should be saved, except this, that if You will save me it will greatly glorify Your mercy. Surely, if ever I get to heaven, the glorified ones will stand surprised and hold up their hands, and say, 'How came you in here?' Lord, if You will but make me a changed man, the people of my parish will marvel greatly, and say, 'What has God worked!' Therefore, do it and be glorified thereby."

I have an impression upon me that there are persons here, this morning, who are very unlikely ever to be converted, and I pray the Lord that these very men may begin to seek His face. If they do so, they may plead in this wise—"Lord, because I judge myself to be the least likely to be saved, and because others judge me to be so, do be pleased to perform a wonder of grace this morning! Lord, it is nothing to put tame doves on Your finger and teach them to peck from Your lips—this is what saints do. But Lord, if You will lure a wild bird like me and tame me to Your will, You will be renowned, indeed. To lead a lamb by a string as You lead Your gentle children, Lord, is not so hard a thing. But I am as a raging lion, or a hungry wolf. O that Your sovereign grace would transform me into a lamb—then will Your mercy appear glorious, indeed." Plead thus, O sinner, and at the same time look unto Jesus Christ, and you shall find salvation, to the praise of the glory of His grace. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Kings 8:22-53.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—47, 195, 106 (PART II).

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HEALING LEAVES
NO. 1233

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 9, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
(ON BEHALF OF THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY).

"The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."
Revelation 22:2

WE have in the 21st and 22nd chapters of the Book of the Revelation a very wonderful description of heaven upon earth. I shall not attempt to go into any prophetical explanations as to when this will be fulfilled, but we know this for certain, for we have it in so many words, that the holy city, New Jerusalem, will descend out of heaven from God, and that, in a word, there will be, for a time at least, a heaven on earth. But inasmuch as heaven, be it where it may, is still heaven, the description of heaven on earth sufficiently benefits us to reveal, in some measure, the present joys and blessings of the celestial state. We shall not make any mistake if we read the passage as hundreds of thousands have done before us, and as all common readers will always persist in doing, as a description of the heavenly state as it is at *present*, for what can come down from heaven but that which is in heaven? The results of the revealed presence of the God of love must be, to His saints, very much the same at all times. The same glory will be revealed, the same happiness bestowed, the same occupations followed, the same fellowship enjoyed. We may, therefore, consider that we have before us a description of what heaven now is and shall be, world without end, save only that the bodies of the saints are not yet raised and therefore, all the minute details may not be fully developed. The glowing metaphors here employed, for we must, to a large extent, regard the language as figurative, are evidently taken from the garden of Eden. That was man's first inheritance and it is a type of his last. That paradise which the first Adam lost us, the second Adam will regain for us, but with added bliss and superior joy. We shall dwell where a river rolls with placid stream, and compasses a land where there is gold, "And the gold of that land is good, there is bdellium and the onyx stone"—a river watering every tree that is pleasant to the sight and flowing hard by the tree of life in the midst of the garden. Yet, though there is a likeness between heaven and Eden, there is a difference, too, for the earthly paradise with all its perfections was still of the earth, earthy. And the second paradise is, like the Lord from heaven, heavenly and divine. The fatal tree of knowledge of good and evil, hedged about by a solemn threat, grows not in the garden of the immortals. They have known evil, but they now, "know the Lord," and know evil no more. Everything in the

divine paradise is fuller and more abundant. The gold, which in Eden lay in the soil, is used in the heavenly paradise to pave the streets. The river has no earthly source, but is "a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." The Lord, who in Eden walked only at solemn intervals, "among the trees of the garden in the cool of the day," has, in heaven, His tabernacle among men and dwells among them, while the trees which grew in Eden, and ripened their fruits only in autumn, are succeeded by trees with 12 fruitages in the year.

It has been thought that man would have preserved the immortality of his body by eating of the tree of life in Eden and that therefore, when he sinned he was shut out from it, "lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever." Some even go so far as to think that the extreme longevity of the antediluvians may have been helped by the remaining influence of that wondrous food upon the constitution of man for many generations. Of that we know nothing, it is all conjecture. It is, however, very customary for expositors to speak of the tree of life in the garden as the sacrament of the primeval age, the eating of whose fruit they conceive to be the grand means of preserving Adam from death. Now, there is a tree of life in heaven, but there is this difference, that it is more accessible—more accessible even than when Adam was in perfection—for if there were but one tree of life in the garden, the garden was certainly divided by the river which flowed in several streams through it. Therefore, the tree could not always be easily reached from all parts of the garden. In the passage before us, we have the tree of life on either side of the river, which, I suppose, intends that there were many such trees—though there was only one tree as to its kind, yet many in number. The picture presented to the mind's eye would appear to be that of a wide street with a river flowing down the center, like some of the broader canals of Holland, with trees growing on either side, all of them of the same kind, all called the tree of life. I do not know how we can make the figure out in any other way. Some have represented the tree as only one and growing in the *bottom* of the river, rising out of the water, and so sending boughs on either side, being, itself, so large as to shade all the city. Such a conception is almost monstrous. But to conceive of many trees of life, all one tree as to quality and nature, growing all along the street, is to present a beautiful image which can very readily be conceived by the mind. At any rate, to all the inhabitants of heaven the tree of life is equally and perpetually accessible. They may come at it when they may. No cherub's flaming sword stands there to keep them back, but they may always come and eat of its 12 fruitages and pluck its healing leaves—

"Joy here holds court within its own metropolis.
And through its midst the crystal river flows
Exhaustless from the everlasting throne,
Shaded on either side by trees of life

Which yield in still unvarying interchange
Their ripe vicissitude of monthly fruits
Amid their clustering leaves medicinal."

We are about to speak only of the *leaves* of this true *arbor vitae*, "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Of what can this tree be a type but of our Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation? What can it signify but that the presence of Christ preserves the inhabitants of heaven forever free from sickness, while beyond heaven, the precincts among the nations, the saving influence is scattered? As the leaves fall from the trees, so does sacred influence descend from our Lord Jesus in heaven down to the sons of men. And as the leaves are the least precious products of a fruit-bearing tree, so the least things that have to do with Him and come from Him have a healing virtue in them. I shall handle the text very briefly *in reference to heaven* and then, at full length, endeavor to bring out its relation *to earth*, as the Holy Spirit may enable me.

I. In REFERENCE TO HEAVEN. If you read the passage you will see that the heavenly city is described as *having an abundance of all manner of delights*. Do men rejoice in wealth? "The very streets are paved with gold exceedingly clear and fine." The gates are pearls and the walls are built of precious stones. No palace of the Caesars or of the Indian Moguls could rival the gorgeous riches of the city of the Great King—

"That city with the jeweled crest
Like some new-lighted sun.
A blaze of burning amethyst,
Ten thousand orbs in one."

In our cities, we feel greatly the need of light. It must have been a dreary age when our ancestors groped their way at night through unlighted streets, or gathered poor comfort from the feeble, struggling rays of a poor candle placed over each householder's door. The heavenly city knows no night at all and consequently, needs no candle. Indeed, its endless day is independent of the sun itself, "For the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof." Conveniences for worship are terribly needed in many of our great cities, and it is a good work to erect temples in which worshippers may assemble. But, speaking paradoxically, heaven is well-supplied in this respect, because of an utter absence both of the need of such places and of the places themselves. "I saw no temple therein," for, indeed, the whole place is a temple. And every street is, in the highest sense, hallowed ground. O blessed place, where we shall not need to enter into our closet to worship our Father who is in heaven, but shall, in the open street, behold the unveiled vision of God. O blessed time, when there shall be no Sabbaths, but one endless Sabbath! O joy of joys when there shall be no breaking up of happy congregations, but where the general assembly and church of the firstborn shall be met for an everlasting *service* and spend it all in glorifying God.

Cities on earth should, more and more, strive after purity. I am glad that more attention is being paid to cleanliness. Too long has the age of

filth made the crowded populations the prey of disease and death. Up yonder in heaven, the sanitary measures are perfection for, "There shall by no means enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatever works abomination or makes a lie." There, every inhabitant is without fault before the throne of God, having neither spot nor wrinkle. There, everything healthy, everything holy, and the thrice Holy One Himself is in their midst. As for the necessities under which glorified beings may be placed, we know but very little about them, but certainly, if they need to drink, there is the river of the water of life, clear as crystal. And if they require to eat, there are abundant fruits ripening each month upon that wondrous tree. All that saints can possibly need or desire will be abundantly supplied. No pining want or grim anxiety shall tempt them to ask the question, "What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or, with what shall we be clothed?" "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters."

Nor is there merely provision made for bare necessities—their love of beauty is considered. The city itself shines "like a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." And her glorious foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones, insomuch that her light, as seen afar by the nations, gladdens them and attracts them to her. A city whose streets are lined with trees laden with luscious fruits must be lovely beyond all expression. They said of the earthly Jerusalem, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion." But what shall we say of you, O Jerusalem above? Zion! Zion! Our happy home where our Father dwells, where Jesus manifests His love, where so many of our brethren have wended their happy way, to which our steps are evermore directed! Blessed are the men that stand in your streets and worship within your gates! When shall we, also, behold your brightness and drink of the river of your pleasures? Thus, in all respects, the new Jerusalem is furnished. Even with medicine it is supplied, and though we might suppose it to be no more needed, yet it is a joy to perceive that it is there to prevent all maladies in those whom aforetime it has healed. Leaves for health are plentiful, above, and therefore, the inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick."

As everything good is present, our text hints that *nothing ill is there*. One of the worst ills that can happen to a man is sickness, for, if he is suffering from disease, his gold is cold and cheerless metal. If he is languishing, the light is dark in his tabernacle. If he pines away with pain, he cannot enjoy his food—neither is beauty any longer fair to him. But there can be no sickness in heaven because the tree of life bestows immortal health on all beneath its shade. Its leaves exhale a balmy influence, fostering the vigor of immortality. Sickness and suffering are banished by this tree of life. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things

are passed away." As want is banished, as darkness is unknown, as infirmity is shut out, as anxiety and doubt and fear and dread are far away, so will all bodily and spiritual disease be forever removed.

It is, in heaven, according to our text, again, that there grows the tree which is not only health to heaven, but which *brings healing to the nations here below*. Heaven is the abode of Jesus and Jesus is the tree of life. If any man would be healed of the guilt of sin, he must look to the eternal merits of the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, who is now upon the throne of God. If any man would be saved from daily temptation and trial, he must look to our advocate in glory who intercedes for us and pleads that, when sifted as wheat, our faith may not fail. If anyone of us would be saved from spiritual death, we must look to Jesus, for He lives at the right hand of the Father, for because He lives, we shall also live. "He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." I say that Jesus Christ, my Lord and Master, is in heaven and is there comparable to a tree planted in the very center of the city. Under His broad shadow, the redeemed delight to sit, and His leaves, as they are wafted down to earth, bring health with them. If we would be healed, we must gather those leaves and apply them to the wounds and bruises of our souls and we shall surely recover. Look upward, then, by means of the Scripture before us, to heaven, and see it full of every good. See it purged of every ill, and see in it the great conduit Head, from which abundant streams of healing flow down to men below.

II. Now, let us come practically to the text IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES BELOW. "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." There is, then, an abundance of healing power in Jesus Christ and His salvation. Not only is His fruit sweet and nourishing, but the leaves, the little things, as it were, about Christ, are full of healing virtue.

We will begin our meditation upon the truth of the text by noticing that *all the nations are sick*. Leaves are provided for their healing which would be superfluous if they did not require to be healed. We have, in our time, heard great talk about discovering pure, unsophisticated tribes, beautiful in native innocence, untainted with the vices of civilization. But it has turned out to be all talk. Travelers have penetrated into the heart of Africa and they have found these naked innocents—but they have turned out to be "hateful and hating one another." Voyagers have landed upon lovely islets of the sea and found unsophisticated innocents eating each other! They have gone into the backwoods and discovered—

"The poor Indian, whose untutored mind
Sees God in clouds, and hears Him in the wind,"

but they have found him cunning as a fox and cruel as a wolf. Though Pope tells us that the true God is—

"Father all in every age,
In every clime adored,
By saint, by savage, and by sage,
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord,"

yet we find neither sages nor savages so worshipping unless the gospel has instructed them. No, the savage nations have been found so morally sick that their customs have shocked humanity and men have turned from them with horror. Alas, poor human nature, even apart from the many evil inventions of civilization, your disease is terrible.

Neither have nations been delivered from the dread malady of sin by refinement and culture. They tell us a great deal about the wonderful perfection of the ancient Greeks, and certainly, they did understand how to draw the human form. And for delineating physical grace and beauty, we cannot rival their sculptors, but when we come to look at the Greek *moral* form, how graceless and uncomely. The ordinary morals of a Greek were too horrible to be described. When Paul felt it absolutely necessary to speak of them, he was obliged to write that terrible first chapter of Romans, which no man can read without a blush, or close without a sigh that such an indictment was so sadly just. God forbid that the filthiness which the ancients tolerated should ever be revived among us; their very sages were not clear from unmentionable crimes. The Hindus and Chinese, those polished nations of modern times, do they excel? Is it not a fact that India reeks with lasciviousness which will not endure to be thought upon? Ah, Lord God, you know! All the nations need healing, our own among them. If you doubt it, open your eyes and ears. Do not iniquities abound? Are not profanities to be heard in our very streets? Go to the west end and see its fashionable sin, or to the east end and see its more open wickedness. Or stay on this side the Thames and mark the degradation of thousands. Overwhelming evidence will come before you to show that our nation needs healing, if you traverse the streets beneath the pale light of the moon, or even pass the doors of those haunts of gaiety which have, of late, been so enormously multiplied.

And all individuals in every nation need healing. It is not that some of us are sick and some whole by nature, but we are altogether fallen, and all of us are born in sin. The evil is in our nature from the very beginning and nothing within the reach of mere man can purge away the evil, let him dream as he may.

There is but one cure for the nations—the leaves of the tree. There grows no healing herb but the one plant of renown. There is one sacred fountain, to wash, therein, is health—there is but one, it was opened on Calvary. There is one great Physician who lays His hands on men and they are restored—there is but one. Those who pretend that their hands can minister salvation, and that drops of water from their fingers can bring regeneration, are accursed. No, there is no balm in Gilead, there is no physician there—the balm is at the cross. The Physician is at the right hand of God.

Jesus is pictured, here, as a blessed tree whose leaves heal the nations. Now the point of the text is this, that *the very leaves are healing*, from which I gather that the least thing about Christ is healing. It is said of the blessed man in the first Psalm, “His leaf, also, shall not wither.”

God takes care of the little things, the trifles of believers, and here, of our Lord, it is said, "The leaves are for the healing of the nations." That is to say, even His common things, His lower blessings of divine grace are full of virtue. Many know but very little about Jesus Christ, but if they believe on Him, that little heals them. How very few of us know much of our Lord; some only know that He came into the world to save sinners. I wish that they knew more, so that they could feed upon the fruits of the tree of life. But even to know that is salvation to them, for the leaves heal the nations. Do you know yourself a sinner? Will you have Christ to be a Savior? Soul, will you rely upon His precious blood to make expiation for your sin? Then, though you have not yet reached up to the golden apples, yet since a *leaf* has fallen upon you, it will save you. The touch of His hand opened deaf ears. The spittle of His lips enlightened blind eyes. The look of His eyes softened hard hearts. The least fragment of this sovereign remedy has omnipotence in it.

We may also learn that the most humble and most timid faith in Jesus Christ will save. It is a grand thing to believe in Jesus Christ with all your heart, and soul, and strength. It is delightful never to doubt, but to go from strength to strength until you come to full assurance of understanding. But if you cannot thus mount up with wings as eagles, you will be saved if you come limping to Jesus. If you have but a mustard-seed of faith, you are saved. She who in the great crowd touched but the hem of the Savior's garment, found that virtue flowed out of Him and came to her. Pluck a leaf of this tree by your poor trembling faith, and if you dare not take more than that, yet shall it make you whole.

Beloved, after we have been saved from our sin by faith in Jesus Christ, it is very wonderful how everything about Christ will help to purge the blood, which as yet is not cleansed. Study His example and as you look at the lovely traits of His character—His gentleness and yet His boldness, His consecration to our cause and His zeal for the glory of God—you will find, as you value His excellences, they will exercise a curative power over you. You will be ashamed to be selfish, you will be ashamed to be idle, you will be ashamed to be proud when you see what Jesus was. Study Him and you will grow like He. If we take His precepts, and I hope we prize them as highly as we do His doctrines, there is not a command of our Lord but what possesses a sacred power, by the application of the Holy Spirit, to cure some fault or other of our character. Do as He bids you and you shall be made whole. Why, there is not a word that ever fell from those dear lips but what bears healing in it for some one or other of the thousand ills that have befallen our humanity. It is a sweet thing to get even a broken text from His mouth. His least words are better than the best of others. Lay a word from Him, like a grain of medicine, upon your tongue and keep it there all day—with what a flavor it fills the mouth! How sweetly it perfumes the breath! It is a grand thing to bind a promise round your arm—how strong it makes each sinew! How forceful for the battle of life. It is a blessed thing to take His cheering

words, which are as fragrant as "a cluster of camphire," and carry them in your bosom, for they chase away sadness and inspire dauntless courage. A word of His, being *His,* and recognized as *His* and coming home to the heart as *His*, brings healing to head and heart, conscience and imagination, desire and affection. A leaf of the tree of life is a medicine fitted to raise the dead. Do you not know its power by a joyful experience? Blessed be God, some of us know it right well, and can bear glad witness to its matchless power.

Then, too, *this medicine heals all sorts of diseases*. The text puts it, "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." It does not say of this or that malady, but by its silence it teaches us that the medicine is universal in its curative power. Take this medicine, then, dear friends, to any man, whoever he may be, and let it be applied by the Spirit of God, and it will heal him of whatever disease he has because the gospel strikes at the root of all diseases. Truly it exercises power over all the different branches of the upas tree of evil, but it does so by laying the axe at the root, for it deals with sin, the sin of unbelief, the sin of not loving God. No medicine can ever heal all maladies unless it eradicates the root of the evil and creates a fountain of health. Now, the gospel applied by the Spirit of God is radical. It goes to the root of the matter, operates upon the heart, and purifies the issues of life. Human precepts and methods of morality lop the branches, but leave the trunk of the deadly tree untouched—but this cuts the taproot and tears away the evil growth from beneath the soil. For this cause it is able to remove all diseases.

This medicine heals disease because it searches into the innermost nature. Some medicines are only for the skin—others will only touch a few organs and those not vital. But the leaves of the gospel tree, when taken as medicine, penetrate the mind and search the heart. Their searching operations divide between the joints and the marrow, and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. A wondrous medicine this! It searches the soul through and through and never ceases its operations till it has purged the entire manhood of every relic of sin and made it completely clean. Lord, give us these leaves! Lord, give us these leaves continually! Create in us a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us. "Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom." But this can never be unless You give us to drink of this most potent medicine.

These leaves prevent the recurrence of disease by enabling the man, from then on, to find good in all that comes to him. A person diseased, if healed, may, by the food which he shall afterwards receive, bring on the disease again. Place a man under certain conditions which cause him an illness—you may heal him—but if you lead him back to those conditions, he may soon be ailing again. And here, in such a world as this, even if Christ healed us today, we should be sick to death tomorrow if the medicine had not some wondrous continuance of power. And so it is. For all things that come to us after conversion are changed, because we are

changed. All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose. Have we earthly joy? We no longer idolize it, but it now points us to God, the Giver. Have we earthly sorrow? We dare not despair because of it, for we know who has ordained it. Why should a child of God complain who knows that there is love in every chastening stroke of his Father's rod? What we once called good is now really good to us. What we called ill is no longer ill to us, for the leaves of the tree of life are an infallible antidote. What would have been our poison is now our food, and what might have destroyed us, now builds us up.

This wondrous medicine abides in the system as a source of health. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Other medicine taken into the system acts in its own manner and that is an end of it, but this abides. These healing leaves change the life blood, affect the spirits, and make the nature other than it was before. Yonder in heaven, those faces which look so bright and comely, fresher than new born babes, owe their freshness to these healing leaves. And so until the glory life begins, the abiding power of the healing leaves keeps the soul of the believer in perpetual health and will keep him so, world without end.

I have shown that the leaves will heal all diseases. I will occupy a minute with the glad truth that *these leaves heal whole nations*. They are suited to the peculiarities of differing nations. The gospel has never been carried to a people who did not need it, or whom it did not suit. It has been found equally applicable to the ignorant African and the subtle Hindu. No man has been found too degraded for its operation, nor too civilized for its benefits. The gospel has such abundant power that it heals nations and, "nations," is a large word, comprehending millions. But the leaves of this tree can heal countless armies of men, and it will—

"...Never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God
Are saved to sin no more."

It is a happy circumstance that an agent of such potency is diffusible by the simplest means. A medicine consisting of leaves may be carried by the apothecary where he wills—it is no cumbrous matter. So may we carry the gospel to the utmost ends of the earth—and we will carry it and send it to every habitation. The winds shall waft it, the waves shall bear it wherever man is found. These leaves are not cumbrous like the stage properties of Popery, but are readily scattered, and wherever they go, no climate injures them. The cold of Greenland has not been too severe to prevent the Greenlander rejoicing in the Savior's blood. And the heat of the torrid zone has not been too intense to prevent believers from rejoicing in the Sun of Righteousness. No, beloved, the gospel heals nations wherever the nations may be and readily heals them of the direst miseries and the blackest crimes. It is the cure for poverty, by making men wise and economical. It is the cure for slavery, teaching men to love their

fellows and respect the rights of all. It is the cure for drunkenness, weaning the drunkard from his filthy appetite, saving him from the spell which binds him. The gospel is the only preventive for war. We shall need no blood-red soldiery when once the warriors of the Cross have won the day. This is the cure for those foul evils which are the curse of our social economies, which human laws too often increase instead of remove. This shall purge us from every form of knavery, rebellion and discontent, and this only. God grant that its healing influences may drop upon the nations thick as leaves in Vallambrosa, till that golden age shall dawn in which the world shall be the abode of moral health.

I must remind you, before I pass from this, and it is a very sweet thing to remind you of, *that this medicine is given and appointed for the very purpose of healing*. I draw your attention to this for the comfort of any who feel their sickness this morning—"The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." You look up to this tree and say, "I am sick at heart. I know that here is my cure, but may I dare to partake of it?" Partake freely, for the tree was planted on purpose for you. In the eternal purpose and decree of God, Christ was given to heal the nations. In actual fulfillment, He has healed nations—many nations already enjoy a partial health because multitudes of individuals in those nations have been healed. Great works have been done in the Isles of the Sea. When I think of England, and of the gems of the Southern Sea, and of Madagascar, the Lord seems to have a peculiar favor towards the isles, for in the islands the gospel has spread more abundantly then elsewhere—"Let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof." The tree is planted with intent that its leaves should heal—you need not, then, hesitate and inquire, "May I be healed?" It grows for the sick. Are you sick? It grows for you. The other day I was thirsty and passed a drinking fountain. I never paused to ask whether I might drink, for I knew it was placed there for the thirsty, and being thirsty, I drank. Who hesitates, for a moment, when he is in a lonely spot upon the beach and finds that there is health in every billow, to strip himself and plunge into the wave? Does he ask if he may? Surely God has spread the ocean that man may bathe. If I want to breathe, being in the air, I ask no man's liberty to breathe, nor do I sigh for God's leave, either, for did not He give me liberty when He gave me lungs and bade the breezes blow? Since you see Christ before you, brethren, take Christ! You need not ask any man's liberty, nor pine for divine permission. Has He not said, "Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely"? He bids you receive. He commands you to believe and He threatens you if you do not. He says to His servants—"Compel them to come in." And as to those who refuse to come, He says, "He that believes not shall be damned." What fuller leave or license can be imagined?

These words to close with. Are you sick this morning? Take these leaves freely. Are you very sick? The stronger is the reason you should take them. You are sinful. Past guilt troubles you—take the leaves again

and again. Worse than that, tendencies to evil afflict you. You want to be rid of them—feed on the purging leaves as long as you live and they will prove an antidote. You need not think that you will exhaust the merit or power of Christ, for if the fruit is described as coming 12 times in the year, how abundant must the leaves be? There is enough in Christ for every sin-sick sinner. If the sinner does but come to Jesus, he shall find no stint in Jesus' healing power. Though the sick soul is full of leprosy, the Savior is full of grace. Put forth your finger, sister, and touch the hem of Jesus' garment now. Lift your eyes, sinner, look to Christ on the cross. Though He seems far away from you, there is life in a glance, however dim the eyes or distant the view. Come to this tree—its very leaves will heal you.

Last of all, are you healed? Well, then, scatter these leaves. Are you saved? Speak of Jesus Christ to everybody. I wish you to teach others a whole Christ, if you can. I desire, always, to make my ministry like Simeon's action when he took the Redeemer altogether into his arms, and said, "Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace." There was a long span of time between Simeon, with the Son of the Highest in his arms, and the woman who touched the hem of the Master's garment—yet both have gone to heaven—and there is a good span of time between the Christian who can embrace a whole Christ, and a poor timid one who can only tremblingly hope in Him.

If you cannot tell others all about Christ, and give them the fruit of the tree, go and give them the leaves. And one very convenient way of doing so is that which you may help today, by aiding the Religious Tract Society, the friend of us all, on whose behalf I will add a word or two. "The leaves of the tree"—that is to say, even little portions and single pages about Christ will do good. It is a rule of the Tract Society that every tract shall have enough of Christ in it to save a soul if God shall bless it. Do not despise a mere leaf, or as you say, "a leaflet," for if Christ is in it, it is a leaf of the tree and He will bless it. Scatter, then, the gospel leaflets. Perhaps you have not the means to distribute Bibles and larger books—cover, then, your pathway with tracts. Large portions of our country still need wide distributions of tracts and all the world outside our country needs the gospel, and needs the gospel in the printed form. Scatter the leaves. Let them fall as thickly as leaves descend in the last days of autumn. Scatter them everywhere, since they are for the healing of the nations. The Tract Society, however, not only provides us with very excellent tracts, but it brings out books upon common subjects written in a religious tone. And this class of literature I hope will be multiplied, because people will not always read books on religious topics, but will read works on other subjects—and when these are written in a religious spirit, they will exercise the most healthful influence. These books are not exactly the fruits of the life-giving tree, but they are leaves, and life is in them. I am glad to see the Society bringing out pictures to hang on cottage walls and little illustrative texts done in colors, and the like, for any-

thing about Christ will do good. It is wonderful how a little thing may save a soul, if Christ is in it. "A verse may strike him from whom a sermon flees," and a picture on a wall may awaken a train of thought in a man who would not listen to that same thought if spoken in words.

Remember Colonel Gardiner and his remarkable conversion by looking at a picture of Christ upon the cross. While waiting to fulfill an assignment of the most infamous kind, he saw a picture of our dying Lord, and under it written—"I did all this for you, what have you done for Me?" The assignment was never kept and the colonel became a brave soldier for Jesus Christ. Possibly we may not think well of representations of the crucifixion, which is a theme beyond the painters' art, but there can be no question that it is our duty to set forth Christ among the people by our speech, so that he may be seen by their mind's eye, evidently crucified among them.

Make the passing throng see the gospel in every corner of the streets if you can. Paste up texts of Scripture among business announcements. Hang them up in your kitchens, in your parlors, and in your drawing rooms. I hate to see Christian men hang up abominable Popish things, as they sometimes do, because they happen to be works of art. Burn every one of such artful works, whether prints or paintings. I would take the hammer and administer it with an iconoclastic zeal on all images and pictures of saints and virgins, and the like, which do but tempt men to idolatry. Do not degrade your houses by anything which insults your God, but let your adornments be such as may lead men's thoughts aright. And never let a man say, in hell, "I was misled by a work of art on your wall which was also a work of the devil and suggested evil thoughts." Everywhere bring Christ to the front and scatter His words, like leaves from the tree. If you cannot do more, do this and show your gratitude to your Lord.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Revelation 21, 22:1-5.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—145, 867, 539.

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

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THE FINAL SEPARATION
NO. 1234

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

"And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." Matthew 25:32.

JESUS Christ, the man of Nazareth, who is also the Son of God, was crucified, dead, and buried, and the third day, He rose again from the dead. After He had showed Himself to His disciples for 40 days—sometimes to one alone, at other times, to two or three together, and on one occasion, to above 500 brethren at once—He ascended into heaven. From the Mount Olivet, from the midst of His disciples, He rose into mid-air and by-and-by, a cloud received Him out of their sight. That same Jesus who is gone into heaven shall so come in like manner as He was seen to go up into heaven. That is to say, in person, in His own risen body. The same Christ who rose into the skies will, in the latter day, surely descend again. The time of His coming is not revealed to us—"Of that day and that hour knows no man, no, not the angels of God," but the time is certainly growing nearer every day, and we cannot tell when the hour shall be. We are told that He will come quickly. It seems a long time since that was said, even 1,800 years, but we remember that things which are slow with us may be very quick with the Lord, for one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. It is not for us to know the times and the seasons. They remain hidden in the purpose of God.

For excellent reasons, these times and seasons are unrevealed, that we may be always on the watchtower, not knowing at what hour the Lord Jesus may be revealed. To the ungodly world He will come as a thief in the night and take them unaware. But we, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake us as a thief. Being children of the day, we are taught to be wakeful, and standing in the clear light, with our loins girt, we ought to be always looking for our Master's appearing. Always are we to be watching, never sleeping.

Our text tells us that, as one result of His coming, there will be a general judgement. I am not going, tonight, to try and arrange the other events which will happen at the Lord's coming. It is probably true that at His coming there will be, first of all, a resurrection and rewarding of His saints, a dividing of the 10 cities and the five cities, according to the faithfulness of those who were entrusted with talents. And at the close of that period will come that last tremendous day of which prophets and apostles have spoken—

"The day that many thought should never come;
That all the wicked wished should never come;
That all the righteous had expected long;

Day greatly feared, and yet too little feared
By him who feared it most."

A day of fear and wrath; a day of destruction of the ungodly; a testing day to all mankind; a day which shall burn as an oven. We may tremblingly say of it, "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 fuller's soap."

At that day, when Christ shall come, He shall judge all nations. There will be gathered before Him not only the Jews, to whom the law was given, but the Gentiles, also. Not merely those nations who for many an age have heard the gospel, but those to whom it shall then have been but lately published, for the kingdom of God must be published throughout all nations as a testimony against them. Everywhere Christ will have been preached and, then, from all regions, men shall be summoned to stand before Him. Remember, not merely all the living nations, but all the nationalities that have passed away. There shall rise from the dead the hosts that perished before the flood and those, also, who were drowned amid its awful surges. There, too, shall appear the myriads that followed at the call of Nimrod, the swarms of the sons of Japheth, who divided the isles of the Gentiles, and the hordes that marched to battle at the command of the kings of Assyria and Babylon. The dead of Egypt shall rise from their beds of spices, or from the earth with which their dust has mingled. The tens of thousands shall be there over whom Xerxes wept when he remembered how soon they would all pass away. The Greek and the Persian, these shall rise, and the Roman too, and all the hordes of Huns and Goths that swarmed like bees from the northern hives. They all passed into the unknown land, but they are not lost—they shall each answer to the muster roll in the great day of the Lord. The earth, which is now becoming more and more a graveyard, shall yield up her dead and the sea itself transformed into a solid pavement, shall bear upon its bosom the lonely ones who today lie asleep in her gloomy caverns. All of woman born shall come forth from the prolific womb of the sepulcher—myriads, myriads countless as the drops of the morning, or as the sands of the sea shore. Multitudes, multitudes shall be gathered together in the valley of decision. Their bones shall come together and breath shall enter their bodies anew, and they shall live once more. Long as they have slept in the tomb, they shall all rise with one impulse and start up with one thought—*to appear before their Judge*.

The great white throne shall be set on high, all pure and lustrous, bright and clear like a sapphire stone, as one vast looking glass in which every man shall see himself and his sins reflected—and on that throne shall sit the Son of Man. That same Jesus who was nailed to the tree and rose to heaven shall sit upon the judgement seat, appointed to determine the cases of all mankind of every age. What an assemblage! No imagination can compass it. Far as the eyes can see—yes, far as the eagle's pinion can soar—the earth shall be covered with men like a field with grass in the springtide. And there will they all stand with the Judge upon the great white throne as the common center of observation, for every eye shall see Him, and they, also, that crucified Him. And all the kindreds of

the earth shall wail because of Him. It will be a motley throng, as you may well imagine, but the Shepherd, the great Shepherd, the Judge, Himself, shall divide them. That division will be the one work of the judgement day. He will divide them as readily and unerringly as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. My business, tonight, shall be to draw the attention of each one to that division, that each of you may inquire what will be the result of it upon himself. I have thought it over on my own account, and desire to think of it, still. I would bid my mind fly into the future and see, for a moment, "The pomp of that tremendous day when Christ, with clouds, shall come." I would anticipate the verdict of that hour and I would think of the dread alternative of heaven or hell. I pray we may all think of it and especially you who are unprepared for it, that you may at once fly to Him whose blood and righteousness alone can make you hold up your head in that tremendous hour.

Three things we shall speak about—the first is *the division.* The second is *the Divider.* And the third is *the rule of the division*.

I. The first, then, is THE DIVISION. "Before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats."

That is to say, first, *they shall be divided into two parts*—His sheep and the goats. There shall be two positions—He shall put His sheep on the right hand, but the goats on the left. Is there no place for a *third* party? No, for the simple reason that there will, then, be no third class. And there will, then, be none for this reason—that there never *was* a third class. I know there are some here, tonight, who dare not say they believe in Jesus, but they would not like to be put down among the ungodly. Yet I pray you remember that there are but two books—and in one or the other of those two, your name must stand recorded by the hand of God—for there is no third book. There is the Lamb's Book of Life and if your name is there, happy are you. If it is not there, your sins still stand recorded in the book which contains the condemning evidence which will seal the death warrants of unbelievers. Listen to me. There are in this world, nowhere, any other sort of people beside those who are dead in sin and those who are alive unto God. There is no state between. A man either lives or is dead. You cannot find a neutral condition. A man may be in a swoon, or he may be asleep, but he is alive—there is no state that is not within the boundary of either life or death. Is not this clear enough? There is no state between being converted and unconverted—between being quickened and being dead in sin. There is no condition between being pardoned and having our sins upon us. There is no state between dwelling in darkness and being brought into marvelous light. One or the other must always be our condition—and this is the great folly of mankind in all times—that they will dream of a middle state and try to loiter in it. It was for this cause that the old prophet, standing on Carmel's brow, said, "How long halt you between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him: but if Baal, follow him." And it is for this reason that we have constantly to call the attention of mankind to the great declaration of the gospel—

"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved: he that believes not shall be damned."

God has given to the preacher two hands that he may set the people on each side and deal out the truth to two characters and no more. Be not deceived about it, you are either on the way to heaven or on the road to hell. There is no "purgatory" or middle condition in the next world. "Purgatory" is an invention of the Pope for the filling of his cellar and his pantry—and no more profitable speculation has ever been set agoing than the saying of masses and the robbing of dupes under the pretence of altering that state which is fixed forever. Purgatory Pick-Purse was the name the first reformers gave it. But you will go to heaven or to hell—and you will remain in one place or the other—for you have either a character that is fit for heaven or a character that is fit for hell. There is no character which can be supposed, if we understand the Scriptures correctly, which would be fit for a middle place. And neither is there any middle place prepared for it. "He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left." The human flock will be divided into two companies.

Observe, next, that *they will be divided readily*. It is not everybody that could divide sheep from goats. I suppose, according to your ordinary judgement of goats, you could very readily tell them from sheep. But one who has traveled in the East and even in Italy, knows that it takes somewhat tutored eyes to know a certain kind of goat from a certain kind of sheep. They are extremely like each other—the wool of some sheep in a warm climate becomes so like hair and the hair of a kind of goat is so much like wool, that a traveler scarcely knows which is which—but a shepherd who has lived among them knows the difference well. So in this world, it is easy enough to tell the sinner from the saint in some cases; you need no great wit to discern the characters of the grossly dishonest, the drunk, the debauched, the Sabbath-breaker, the profane. You know that they have no part among the people of God, for they bear upon themselves the ensigns of the children of the evil one—the immoral are easily separated from the pure in heart. But inside the church there are a number of persons who have so much about them that looks good and yet so much that is terribly inconsistent, that we are quite unable to discover which is their true nature. Thank God we are not called upon to judge them, nor even allowed to do so. The most experienced pastor must scarcely attempt to do so. Certainly, if he feels so much trouble about the matter that he takes it to his Lord and asks for directions as to how to deal with these tares, he will be told to let them grow on till harvest time, lest in rooting up the tares he should root up, also, the wheat with them. I talked, today, to a certain good man who labors hard among the poor in the East end. He said, "We have a great number who profess to be converted, but," he said, "I do not think that much more than one in five actually stay and turn out to be really so. "But," he said, "we have no trouble about them in the church—no such trouble as you would be likely to have with your people, because," he said, "among the class of people who

go to the Tabernacle there is a feeling that it is right to go to the House of God at least once on the Sabbath, if not twice. And if persons join the church there they will, from habit, continue to attend. But," he said, "the moment a man of the poorest class ceases to be a Christian in heart, he ceases, at the same time, to attend the public services, because there is no fashion to keep him up to it. And so he follows his own tastes, stops at home and loafs about, and in all probability gets drunk, or falls into some other of the common vices of his class, and he is sifted off at once." In such cases, the classes are easily separated. But among a more respectable class of people, who do not drink and who observe the Sabbath, you will have a number of people who remain in the church, though they have no secret piety, no real love to Christ, no private prayer, and therefore, there is all the more danger. Now, dear friends, what *we* cannot do, and must not try to do, Jesus Christ will do easily enough. The Shepherd, when He comes, will soon separate His sheep from the goats. His eyes of fire will read each heart. The hypocrites in the church will tremble in a moment—instinctively reading the meaning of that glance, as Christ will by that glance say to them, "What are you doing, here, among My people?"

Remember, that as the division will be made readily, *it will be made infallibly,* that is to say, there will not be found among the goats one poor trembling sheep left to be driven off with the unclean herd. When Christ says, "Depart, you cursed," He will not say that to one sincere, but feeble soul. Ah no, you may condemn yourself, but if you really have a living faith, the Lord will not condemn you. You may often be afraid that He will bid you depart, but He will not. No lamb of His flock shall be among the goats. The whole company of His redeemed shall be safely gathered into their eternal mansions—

"Lord, those shall bear that day, so dread, so splendid,
Whose sins are, by Your merits covered over,
Who when Your hand of mercy was extended,
Believed, obeyed, and owned Your gracious power;
These, mighty God, shall see without dismay
The earth and heaven before them pass away."

The sword cuts the other way, too, and therefore be sure of this, that there will be no goat allowed to enter the pastures of the blessed among the sheep. No unconverted graceless person will follow the Great Shepherd to those living fountains above, which afford eternal draughts of bliss to the purchased flock. Though the sinner may have led a sort of outwardly consistent life for 40 or 50 years, though he may have preached the gospel and done many wonderful works, yet Christ will say to him, "I never knew you." He will not be able to keep on his sheep's clothing, then, or bleat any longer in sheep fashion—Christ will know him under whatever disguise he may wear. He will find him out and drive him to his own place, so that not a single one of the accursed shall enter into the city with the blessed. It will be an infallible judgment. There is, therefore, good reason that we are prepared for it. There is no bribing or deceiving the judge and no avoiding His tribunal. Oh, be ready to face that eye which will read you through and through!

That division, when it shall take place, let me further beg you to remember, *will be very keen and sharp*. Think it over; think it over, for some of you may have to smart through it. Two men shall be in the field, one shall be taken and the other left. There were two laborers who worked together. They had guided the same plow and driven the same oxen, but the one shall be upon the right hand and the other on the left. Two carpenters at the same bench had handled the same hammer and the same plane, but one shall be taken and the other left. Two had served in one shop at the same counter with the same goods—and one shall be taken and the other left—they were familiar acquaintances and old shop mates, but one shall rejoice to hear the welcome, "Come," and the other shall tremble as he receives the dread sentence, "Depart." Alas, the division will come closer home, still. Two women shall be in one house—the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill, that is, engaged about the household duties, grinding the morning's breakfast corn—one shall be taken and the other left. So you may be two servants in the same house, cook and housemaid, one saved and the other lost. Two sisters living together under the same roof, one brought into glory and the other cast into shame. Two of you may be dwellers under the same roof, eating bread at the same table, drinking from the same cup and yet one of you shall feast at the eternal banquets and the other shall cry for a drop of water to cool their burning tongue. You would not like to be separated, but separated you must be. Alas, there will be a separation still more painful. Two shall be in one bed, the one shall be taken and the other left—the husband torn away from the wife—and the wife taken from her husband. Oh, there will be partings, there will be partings, and consequently, there will be weeping, there will be weeping at the judgement seat of Christ. Not for the godly, for in them the glory of their Lord will swallow up all other thought, but for the Christless, the prayerless, the graceless. Oh, the wailing of the children, and the wailing of the women, and the wailing of the husbands, and the wailing of the fathers when their children are saved, or their parents are saved, or their husbands and wives are saved—and they themselves are cast out forever.—

"O there will be mourning
Before the judgement seat,
When this world is burning
Beneath Jehovah's feet.
Friends and kindred then shall part,
Shall part to meet no more;
Wrath consume the rebel's heart,
While saints on high adore."

The separation will be agony, indeed, to the lost. I could scarcely have the heart to bid a man, "Good-bye," if I knew that I should never see him again. The worst wish I could entertain concerning the worst enemy I ever had—though I do not know that I have one in the world—would not go so far as to say I wished I might never see him again. Since I hope I shall be where Jesus is, I should like to see him, be he who he may, and see him there among the blessed. But it must not be. It must not be if sinners will not repent of sin, if they persist in rejecting Jesus Christ. Un-

less you believe in Jesus, the parting will be keen and cutting, dividing between joints and marrow, tearing asunder marriage ties and bonds of filial or parental affection—slaying all vain hopes forever. O impenitent souls, I could weep for you! If you are linked in blood relationship with the saints, it will not help you if you die unregenerate! Though you were bone of each other's bone, and flesh of each other's flesh, yet must you be separated unless you are one with Christ. I entreat you unregenerate ones to lay this to heart at once and trifle no longer!

That division, dear friends, remember, *will be very wide* as well as very keen, for the division will be such as will be represented in its distance by heaven and by hell—and what a distance is that! The distance between God and Satan! Between happiness and misery! Between glory and everlasting contempt! Between infinite joy and boundless sorrow! Between songs and weeping! Between triumphs and wailing, feasting and gnashing of teeth! If the only division would be such as might arise from difference in degrees of glory (if such there is), one might still pine to have the companionship of our dear ones—but the difference is between heaven and hell—and Christ says of it that there is "a great gulf fixed," so that they that would pass from us to you cannot and neither can they come to us that would come from there. The distance will be wide as eternity. The separating gulf will be deep as the abyss and impassable as hell.

And, remember, *the separation will be final*. There is no flinging a bridge across that vast abyss. Damned spirits may look down into that dread gulf, into the unutterable blackness of its darkness, but they will never see a hope of crossing to the land of the blessed. The key is lost—they can never come out of the dungeon of despair. "Forever, forever, forever," is written upon the chain which binds the lost spirit. No hope of restoration was ever indulged by a man in hell and it is idle to dream about it now. Of all figments of the imagination, it has the least support in Scripture. The lost sinner is forever separated from Jesus, and from the disciples of Jesus, however near akin in the flesh those disciples may have been to him. Unalterable and eternal is the separation.

Beloved, these are such weighty things that while I dwell upon them I feel far more inclined to sit down and weep than to stand up and speak to you. The theme causes me to feel the weakness of mere words and in a measure makes me lose the power of expression, for what if any of you should be lost forever? It was a touching thing to me, yesterday, when I saw a sister in Christ who has been my hearer for many years. She told me that she was decided for Christ by my saying, when I went away last time, that perhaps I might never address you again and might find a grave in a foreign land. I felt that it might be so at the time I uttered the words, though I am glad that they have not been fulfilled. She thought, "Well, he has been preaching to me these many years, and if I die unconverted, I shall never see him again." And then it flashed across her mind, "How much worse to feel that I shall never see the King in His beauty. I shall never see the Savior." And she was thus led by the Holy Spirit to give her heart to Jesus. Perhaps the Lord may use the thought of this

separation to move some of you to say, "I will come to Jesus and I will rest in Him." O Lord, my God, grant it may be so, for Jesus' sake.

II. We have spoken about *the division*. We will now have a few words about THE DIVIDER. "*He* shall separate them, one from another."

Christ Jesus will be the divider of the race of men into two parts and this I am glad to know, because, first of all, this will be *the occasion of lasting,* yes*, of eternal joy to all the saints*. No child of God will ever have a doubt in heaven, but it is necessary that they begin their bliss with a very strong assurance of divine love, or else, I think, they might. Unless God had ordained the method at which the text hints, I could well imagine myself in heaven saying to myself, after I had been there a little while, "Oh, can it be, can it be that I am here? I do remember the sin of such a day and the shortcomings of such an hour, and my murmurings, and my unbelief, and all my departures from my God, and am I here, after all?" I could imagine, if there had not been the means used to put an end to such a possibility, my saying, "Surely I am to taste this only for a moment that I may be driven to my due deserts, after all, that my hell may be made the more terrible because I have seen what heaven is, and that my hunger may grow the more intolerable because I have eaten of the bread of angels." If such a fear were possible, behold the answer to it. "He, the Judge, the Judge, the Judge, Himself, has said, 'Come, you blessed of My Father.'" That Judge cannot be mistaken, for He is Jesus the infallible Son of God. God Himself has blessed His chosen and Jesus tells them so in the plainest terms—"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." Since Jesus has decreed this everlasting happiness, the child of God cannot doubt throughout eternity. That voice will sound forever in his ears, sweeter than music of flute or harp or dulcimer. "Come, you blessed of My Father." Why, it will be the very basis of the bliss of heaven to think, "Jesus bade me come. Who shall ask me the question, 'How came you in here?' Did not *He* admit me? Who shall question my right to be here? Did not *He* say, 'Come, you blessed of My Father'?" Do you not see that it is a choice and comforting fact that we shall not divide ourselves at the last, nor shall an angel do it who might err, but the divider will be Jesus Himself, the Son of God. And therefore, the glory which He metes out to us will be most surely ours and we may enjoy it without fear.

But then, note on the other hand, that *this will increase the terror of the lost*, that Christ will divide them.

Christ, full of infinite love, would He destroy a sinner unless it must be! He that would have saved Jerusalem and wept because it must be destroyed! The guilty city was resolved to perish, but as her Lord pronounced the sentence, He wept. When I hear of a judge putting on the black cap to condemn a man, I like to read in the papers, "The judge's voice faltered and he was evidently unable to suppress his emotion as he uttered the sentence of death." What right-minded man could be otherwise than moved when compelled to deliver his fellow creature to the gallows? But no judge on earth has such compassion for his fellow man as Jesus has for sinners. And when it comes to this that He says, "I must

do it, I must condemn you," then, sinner, it must be so, indeed. When incarnate love says, "Depart, you cursed," you must be cursed with an emphasis. You must be infamous beings, indeed, when He, whose lips drop blessings as lilies drop sweet-smelling myrrh—when *He* calls you so. There must be something very horrible about you that *He* should bid you, "Depart." And indeed, there is an abominable thing in you, for *unbelief in God* is the most horrible thing, even in hell. Not to believe that God is love is worthy of the utmost condemnation. You will have to say, if you are lost, "I was condemned by the most loving Judge that ever sat upon a judgement seat. The Christ that died lifted His pierced hands at the very moment when He said, 'Depart, you cursed!'"

Yet there is something more, though this might be enough. If you should be lost, as God forbid you should, it will infinitely add to your terror to know that you were condemned by one who is infinitely just. You will feel that the Christ who condemned you was the holiest of men, in whom was no sin and besides that, He is pure and perfect God, so that you will not be able to quibble at the sentence. Neither will there be any question about a new trial—your own conscience will make you feel that the decision is final, for it is just—and you will be too well assured of its reality and certainty, for He who will pronounce that sentence is the God of truth. He said, "I am the way and the truth." You would not have Him for the way, but you will find Him to be "the truth." And when He pronounces you cursed, cursed you will be beyond all question.

Once more, if He that condemns you is the Christ of God, you will know that He has power to carry out the sentence, for all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth, and the government shall be upon His shoulders. And if He says, "Depart into everlasting fire," into that fire you must go. If He declares that the fire shall never be quenched, depend upon it, it will burn on forever. And if He decrees that the worm shall never die, that worm will live and gnaw to all eternity, for He who gives forth the sentence is able to make it good. Remember how He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall never pass away"? Firmer than the rocks shall stand the irrevocable decree—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment and the righteous into life eternal." My soul trembles while I thus proclaim Jesus as the Judge whose awful voice divides the sinners from the saints.

III. Lend me your ears but for a minute or two longer, while I notice, in the third place, THE RULE OF THE DIVISION. Did you notice where the division is made? It is very wonderful to notice—very wonderful, indeed. *The great division between the sons of men is Christ.* Here are the sheep—there are the goats. What separates them? Christ! He is the center. There is no great barrier set up, as it were, on that last tremendous day, but He, Himself is the division. He shall set the sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left. Now, that which parts us tonight into two portions is our relationship to Jesus Christ. On which side of Christ are you, tonight? I want you to question yourselves about that. If you are on His right hand, you are among His people. If you are not with Him, you are against Him, and so are on His left hand. That which parts the saint

and the sinner is Christ. The moment a sinner comes to Christ, he passes over to the other side and is numbered with the saints. This is the real point of separation. Christ stands between the believers and the unbelievers, and marks the boundary of each class. When Aaron stood between the living and the dead, swinging the censer full of incense, what separated the dead from the living? Remember the scene before you answer the question. There they lie! There they lie, I say, stricken with pestilence! The unseen avenger has slain them in heaps. But here are the living, rejoicing and safe. What separates them? The priest standing there with the censer. Even thus, our great High Priest stands, at this moment, between the living and the dead, while the incense of His merits ascends before God and makes the most real dividing wall between dead sinners and those who are alive unto God by Jesus Christ. Christ is the divider. Christ is Himself the division.

But what is the rule by which He separates the people? *The rule of the division is, first, actions*. Actions! Did you notice that? He says nothing about words. He dwells upon deeds of mercy, "I was hungry and you gave Me meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me drink. I was naked and you clothed Me." These are all actions. Now, perhaps you would have liked the Judge to have said, "You were in the habit of singing hymns out of 'Our Own Hymn Book.' You were known to talk very sweetly about Me and call Me, Master and Lord. You were accustomed to sit at the communion table." Not a word is said about these things. No, nor is anything said about ceremonial actions. He does not say, "You used to bow before the crucifix. You reverently stood up at one part of the service and knelt at another. You walked round the church singing the processional hymn." Nothing is said about these performances, only common actions are noticed—"I was hungry and you gave Me meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me drink." These are all commonplace matters. Actions will be the great rule at the last judgment. I am not preaching, now, contrary to the gospel, but only repeating in other words what our Lord, Himself, has said. "We shall give an account for the deeds done in the body, whether they are good, or whether they are evil," is the statement, not of the law, but of the New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Those that have *done* evil shall go away into eternal punishment.

Are we, then, saved by our works? By no manner of means. Yet our works are the evidences of our being saved—and grace will bring out these evidences in our lives if we possess them. A magistrate judges by the actions which are proved upon evidence. It is true he may and will have respect to the motive which urged the action, but first of all the actions themselves must be before him in evidence. And so here the King mentions the actions that were done.

Let us notice that the actions which were the rule of judgement *were, all of them, actions about Christ*. I want you to carefully note this. The Lord says, "*I* was hungry and you gave *Me* meat. *I* was thirsty and you gave *Me* drink. *I* was sick and you visited *Me*." This summary is made up of actions about Christ. I will, therefore, earnestly put this question to each of you—What actions have you ever done in reference to Jesus? "I

am a church member," says one. I will not hear about that just now, because the judge will not say anything about it. I am glad you are an avowed disciple, if you are honestly so, but do your actions prove that you are really so? That is the question. Have you ever *done* anything for Christ? Have you ever given anything to Christ? Could Christ say to you, "I was hungry and you gave Me meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me drink"? Now, I know some professors of whom I fear that Jesus Christ could not speak thus, for He cannot speak that which is not true. Their pockets are hermetically sealed, like tins of Australian meat—even the smell of their money never reaches Christ's poor. Give meat to a hungry man? Not they. Let him go to the parish. Give clothes to a naked man? Not they. What do we pay taxes for? The idea of giving anything to another, or doing anything for another, without getting paid for it or praised for it, seems to them to be out of all character. Now, selfishness is as much opposed to the spirit of the gospel as the cold of the northern region is to the warmth of the sun. If the sun of Christ's love has shone into your heart, you will love others and you will show your love to others by desiring to do them good in all sorts of ways. And you will do it for Christ's sake—*for Christ's sake*—so that when He comes, He will be able to say, "*I* was hungry and you gave *Me* meat. *I* was thirsty and you gave *Me* drink. *I* was sick and you visited *Me*. *I* was in prison under reproach and you came unto *Me*." What have your actions been with regard to Christ? I pray you, brethren and sisters, who are one with me in the profession of allegiance to Christ, judge yourselves by your actions with regard to Him, as I, also, will judge myself.

Now, notice that Christ, as it were, inferentially, tells us that *the actions which will be mentioned at the judgement day, as the proof of our being the blessed of the Lord, spring from the grace of God*, for He says, "You blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundations of the world." They fed the hungry, but sovereign grace had first fed *them*. They clothed the naked, but infinite love first clothed *them*. They went to the prison, but free grace had first set them free from a worse prison. They visited the sick, but the good Physician, in His infinite mercy, first came and visited them. They evidently had no idea that there was anything meritorious in what they did. They had never dreamed of being rewarded for it. When they stand before the judgement seat, the bare idea of there being any excellence in what they have done will be new to the saints, for they have formed a very low estimate of their own performances—and what they have done seems to them too faulty to be commended. The saints fed the hungry and clothed the naked because it gave them much pleasure to do so. They did it because they could not help doing it—their new nature impelled them to it. They did it because it was their delight to do good and was as much their element as water for a fish or the air for a bird. They did good for Christ's sake, because it is the sweetest thing in the world to do anything for Jesus. Why is it that a wife is so kind to her husband? Because it is her duty, you say. All very well, but the real reason is because she loves him so intensely. Why is a mother so careful over her baby? Is there any rule

or act of parliament commanding mothers to be fond of their little ones? No, there is no act of parliament. There is an act of God in the bosom, somewhere, passed in the chamber of the heart, and the mother cannot but be kind. Now, when the Lord puts a new nature into us and makes us one with Jesus Christ, we cannot help loving His people, and seeking the good of our fellow men, and the Lord Jesus Christ will own this at the Last Day as an evidence that there was love in the heart, because love was shown by the hand. May God grant that when the Judge of all shall come, we may be found renewed in heart and full of love through the power of His Holy Spirit.

"Oh," says one, "I wish I had that renewed heart which would produce such actions." Jesus can give it to you. You will always live for self in some sense or other until you are saved—even the most philanthropic who have loved their fellow creatures best, without religion—have generally sought their own esteem. And the verse is true concerning the praise of our fellow creatures—

"The proud, to gain it, toils on toils endure;
The modest shun it but to make it sure."

But when you receive a new heart you will not live for the approval of your fellow men. Then your alms will be done in secret and you will not let your left hand know what your right hand does. Then, when you do your kindnesses, it will not be that others may publish abroad the announcement that you have visited the sick and clothed the naked, but your deeds will be done behind the door and in the corner, where none shall know of them but your God and the grateful recipients of your bounty. You will quietly put into the treasury the two mites that make a farthing and think yourself unobserved, but One who sits over against the treasury, who knows your heart, will take good note of it. Your Lord will accept what you do because you do it out of love to Him—and at the last, while you blush to hear it, He will tell it to the angels and to the listening hosts of earth and heaven—and swing wide the gates of immortal bliss and let you in, according to the promise of His grace. God bless you, beloved, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 25.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—846, 362, 360.

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HOW A MAN'S CONDUCT COMES HOME TO HIM
NO. 1235

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 16, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself."
Proverbs 14:14.

A COMMON principle is laid down here and declared to be equally true in reference to two characters, who in other respects are a contrast. Men are affected by the course which they pursue, for good or bad their own conduct comes home to them. The backslider and the good man are very different, but in each of them the same rule is exemplified—they are both filled by the result of their lives. The backslider becomes filled by that which is within him, as seen in his life, and the good man, also, is filled by that which grace implants within his soul. The evil leaven in the backslider leavens his entire being and sours his existence, while the gracious fountain in the sanctified believer saturates his whole manhood and baptizes his entire life. In each case, the fullness arises from that which is within the man and is in its nature like the man's character. The fullness of the backslider's misery will come out of his own ways and the fullness of the good man's content will spring out of the love of God which is shed abroad in his heart.

The meaning of this passage will come out better if we begin with an illustration. Here are two pieces of sponge and we wish to fill them—if you place one of them in a pool of foul water, it will be filled, and filled with that which it lies in. If you put the other sponge into a pure crystal stream, it will, also, become full—full of the element in which it is placed. The backslider lies soaked in the dead sea of his own ways and the brine fills him. The good man is plunged like a pitcher into "Siloah's brook, which flows hard by the oracle of God," and the river of the water of life fills him to the brim. A wandering heart will be filled with sorrow, but a heart confiding in the Lord will be satisfied with joy and peace. Or take two farms. One farmer sows tares in his field, and in due time, his barns are filled therewith. Another sows wheat and his garners are stored with precious grain. Or follow out our Lord's parable—one builder places his frail dwelling on the sand, and when the tempest rages, he is swept away in it, naturally enough. Another lays deep the foundations of his house and sets it fast on a rock—and as an equally natural consequence, he smiles upon the storm, protected by his well-founded dwelling place. What a man is by sin or by grace will be the cause of his sorrow or of his satisfaction.

I. I shall take the two characters without further preface. First, let us speak awhile about THE BACKSLIDER. This is a very solemn subject, but one which it is needful to bring before the present audience, since we all have some share in it. I trust there may not be many present who are backsliders in the worst sense of the term, but very, very few among us are quite free from the charge of having backslidden, in some measure, at some time or other since conversion. Even those who sincerely love the Master sometimes wander—and we all need to take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

There are several kinds of persons who may, with more or less propriety, be comprehended under the term, "backsliders," and these will, each in his own measure, be filled with his own ways. There are, first, *apostates*, those who unite themselves with the church of Christ, and for a time, act as if they were subjects of a real change of heart. These persons are frequently very zealous for a season and may become prominent, if not eminent, in the church of God. They did run well, like those mentioned by the apostle, but by some means they are, first of all, hindered and slacken their pace. After that, they linger and loiter and leave the crown of the causeway for the side of the road. By-and-by, in their hearts they go back into Egypt, and at last, finding an opportunity to return, they break loose from all the restraints of their profession and openly forsake the Lord. Truly, the last end of such men is worse than the first. Judas is the great type of these pre-eminent backsliders. Judas was a professed believer in Jesus, a follower of the Lord, a minister of the gospel, an apostle of Christ. He was the trusted treasurer of the college of the apostles, and after all, turned out to be the "son of perdition," who sold his Master for 30 pieces of silver. He, before long, was filled with his own ways, for tormented with remorse, he threw down the blood-money he had so dearly earned, hanged himself, and went to his own place. The story of Judas has been written over and over again in the lives of other traitors. We have heard of Judas as a deacon and as an elder. We have heard Judas preach. We have read the works of Judas, the bishop, and seen Judas the Missionary. Judas sometimes continues in his profession for many years, but sooner or later, the true character of the man is discovered. His sin returns upon his own head, and if he does not make an end of himself, I do not doubt but what, even in this life, he often lives in such horrible remorse that his soul would choose strangling rather than life. He has gathered the grapes of Gomorrah and he has to drink the wine. He has planted a bitter tree and he must eat its fruit. Oh sirs, may none of you betray your Lord and Master. God grant I never may. *"Traitor! Traitor!"* Shall that ever be written across your brow? You have been baptized into the name of the adorable Trinity. You have eaten the tokens of the Redeemer's body and blood. You have sung the songs of Zion. You have stood forward to pray in the midst of the people of God and will you act so base a part as to betray your Lord? Shall it ever be said of you, "Take him to the place from where he came, for he is a traitor"? I cannot conceive of anything more disgraceful than for a soldier to be drummed out of a regiment of Her Majesty's soldiers. But what must it be to be cast out of the host of God! What must it be to be set up as the target of

eternal shame and everlasting contempt for having crucified the Lord afresh and put Him to an open shame! How shameful will it be to be branded as an apostate from truth and holiness, from Christ and His ways? Better never to have made a profession than to have belied it so wretchedly and to have it said of us, "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." Of such John has 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 they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not of us."

This title of backslider applies, also, to another class, not so desperate but still most sad, of which not Judas but David may serve as the type. We refer to backsliders *who go into open sin*. These are men who descend from purity to careless living. And from careless living to indulgence of the flesh—and from indulgence of the flesh in little matters into known sin—and from one sin to another till they plunge into uncleanness. They have been born again, and therefore, the trembling and almost extinct life within must and shall revive and bring them to repentance. They will come back weary, weeping, humbled, and brokenhearted, and they will be restored, but they will never be what they were before. Their voices will be hoarse, like that of David after his crime, for he never again sung so jubilantly as in his former days. Life will be more full of trembling and trial and manifest less of buoyancy and joy of spirit. Broken bones make hard traveling and even when they are set, they are subject to shooting pains when ill weathers are abroad. I may be addressing some of this sort this morning, and if so, I would speak with much faithful love. Dear brother, dear sister, if you are now following Jesus afar off you will, before long, like Peter, deny Him. Even though you will obtain mercy of the Lord, yet the text will certainly be fulfilled in you and you will be "filled with your own ways." As certainly as Moses took the golden calf and ground it into powder—and then mixed it with the water which the sinful Israelites had to drink till they all tasted the grit in their mouths—so will the Lord do with you if you are, indeed, His child. He will take your idol of sin and grind it to powder—and your life shall be made bitter with it for years to come. When the gall and wormwood are most manifest in the cup of life, it will be a mournful thing to feel, "I procured this unto myself by my shameful folly." O Lord, hold us up and keep us from falling little by little, lest we plunge into overt sin and continue in it for a season, for surely the anguish which comes of such an evil is terrible as death itself. If David could rise from his grave and appear before you with his face seamed with sorrow and his brow wrinkled with his many griefs, he would say to you, "Keep your hearts with all diligence, lest you bring woe upon yourselves. Watch unto prayer and guard against the beginnings of sin lest your bones wax old through your roarings, and your moisture be turned into the drought of summer." O beware of a wandering heart, for it will be an awful thing to be filled with your own backslidings.

But there is a third sort of backsliding and I am afraid a very large number of us have, at times, come under the title—I mean those *who in any measure or degree, even for a very little time, decline from the point*

which they have reached. Perhaps such a man hardly ought to be called a backslider, because it is not his predominant character, yet he backslides. If he does not believe as firmly, love as intensely and serve as zealously as he formerly did, he has, in a measure, backslidden. And any measure of backsliding, be it less or be it more, is sinful, and will, in proportion as it is real backsliding, fill us with our own ways. If you only sow two or three seeds of the thistle, there will not be so many of the ill weeds on your farm as if you had emptied out a whole sack, but still there will be enough and more than enough. Every little backsliding, as men call it, is a great mischief. Every little going back, even *in heart*, from God; if it never comes to words or deeds, yet will involve us in some measure of sorrow. If sin were clean removed from us, sorrow would be removed also—in fact, we would be in heaven—since a state of perfect holiness must involve perfect blessedness. Sin, in any degree, will bear its own fruit, and that fruit will be sure to set our teeth on edge. It is evil, therefore, to be a backslider even in the smallest degree.

Having said so much let me now continue to think of the last two kinds of backsliders, and leave out the apostate. Let us first *read his name*, and then let us read his history—we have both in our text.

The first part of his name is, "*backslider*." He is not a back runner, nor a back leaper, but a back*slider*. That is to say he slides back with an easy, effortless motion—softly, quietly—perhaps unsuspected by himself or anybody else. The Christian life is very much like climbing a hill of ice. You cannot slide up, no, you have to cut every step with an ice axe—only with incessant labor in cutting and chipping can you make any progress. You need a guide to help you and you are not safe unless you are fastened to the guide, for you may slip into a crevasse. Nobody ever slides *up*, and if great care is not taken, they will slide down, slide back, or in other words, backslide. This is very easily done. If you want to know how to backslide, the answer is leave off going forward and you will slide backward. Cease going upward and you will go downward of necessity, for stand still you never can. To lead us to backslide, Satan acts with us as engineers do with a road down the mountain's side. If they desire to carry the road from yonder alp right down into the valley far below, they never think of making the road plunge over a precipice, or straight down the face of the rock, for nobody would ever use such a road. But the road makers wind and twist. See, the track descends very gently to the right—you can hardly see that it runs downwards. And soon it turns to the left with a small incline, and so, by turning this way and then that, the traveler finds himself in the valley below. Thus, the crafty enemy of souls fetches saints down from their high places. Whenever he gets a good man down it is usually by slow degrees. Now and then, by sudden opportunity and strong temptation, the Christian man has been plunged right from the pinnacle of the temple into the dungeon of despair in a moment—but it is not often the case—the gentle decline is the devil's favorite piece of engineering and he manages it with amazing skill. The soul scarcely knows it is going down, it seems to be maintaining the even tenor of its way, but before long it is far below the line of peace and consecration. Our dear brother, Dr. Arnot of the Free Church, illustrates this very

beautifully by supposing a balance. This is the heavy scale loaded with seeds and the other is high in the air. One morning, you are very much surprised to find that what had been the heavier scale is aloft, while the other has descended. You do not understand it till you discover that certain little insects had silently transferred the seeds one by one. At first they made no apparent change, but by-and-by there was a little motion—one more little seed was laid in the scales and the balance turned in a moment. Thus silently, the balance of a man's soul may be affected, and everything made ready for that one temptation by which the fatal turn is made and the man becomes an open transgressor. Apparently insignificant agencies may gradually convey our strength from the right side to the wrong, by grains and half-grains, till at last the balance is turned in the actual life and we are no more fit to be numbered with the visible saints of God.

Think again of this man's name. He is a "backslider," but what from? He is a man who knows the sweetness of the things of God and yet leaves off feeding upon them. He is one who has been favored to wait at the Lord's own table and yet he deserts his honorable post, backslides from the things which he has known, felt, tasted, handled and rejoiced in—things that are the priceless gifts of God. He is a backslider from the condition in which he has enjoyed a heaven below. He is a backslider from the love of Him who bought him with His blood. He slides back from the wounds of Christ, from the works of the Eternal Spirit, from the crown of life which hangs over his head, and from a familiar communion with God which angels might envy him. Had he not been so highly favored he could not have been so basely wicked. O fool and slow of heart, to slide from wealth to poverty, from health to disease, from liberty to bondage, from light to darkness, from the love of God, from abiding in Christ and from the fellowship of the Holy Spirit into lukewarmness, worldliness, and sin.

The text, however, gives the man's name at greater length, "*The backslider in heart*." Now the heart is the fountain of evil. A man need not be a backslider in action to get the text fulfilled in him. He need only be a backslider in *heart*. All backsliding begins within—begins with the heart's growing lukewarm—begins with the love of Christ being less powerful in the soul. Perhaps you think that so long as backsliding is confined to the heart, it does not matter much. But consider, for a minute, and you will confess your error. If you went to your physician and said, "Sir, I feel a severe pain in my body," would you feel comforted if he replied, "There is no local cause for your suffering. It arises entirely from disease of the heart"? Would you not be far more alarmed than before? A case is serious, indeed, when it involves the heart. The heart is hard to reach and difficult to understand, and moreover, it is so powerful over the rest of the system and has such power to injure all the members of the body, that a disease in the heart is an injury to a vital organ, a pollution of the springs of life. A wound there is a thousand wounds, a complicated wounding of all the members at a stroke. Look well, then, to your hearts, and pray, "O Lord cleanse the secret parts of our spirit and preserve us to Your eternal kingdom and glory!"

Now let us *read this man's history*—"He shall be filled with his own ways." From which it is clear that he falls into ways of his own. When he was in his right state, he followed the Lord's ways, he delighted himself in the law of the Lord, and He gave him the desire of his heart. But now he has ways of his own, which he prefers to the ways of God. And what comes of this perverseness? Does he prosper? No. He is, before long, filled with his own ways. We will see what that means.

The first kind of fullness with his own ways is absorption in his carnal pursuits. He has not much time to spend upon religion—he has other things to attend to. If you speak to him of the deep things of God he is weary of you and even of the daily necessities of godliness, he has no care to hear, except at service time. He has his business to see to, or he has to go out to a dinner party, or a few friends are coming to spend the evening. In any case, his answer to you is, "I pray you have me excused." Now, this preoccupation with trifles is always mischievous, for when the soul is filled with chaff, there is no room left for wheat. When your entire mind is taken up with frivolities, the weighty matters of eternity cannot enter. Many professed Christians spend far too much time in amusements, which they call recreation, but which, I fear, is far rather a re-destruction than a recreation. The pleasures, cares, pursuits, and ambitions of the world swell in the heart when they once enter, and by-and-by, they fill it completely. Like the young cuckoo in the sparrow's nest, worldliness grows and grows and tries its best to cast out the true owner of the heart. Whatever your soul is full of, if it is not full of Christ, it is in an evil case.

Then backsliders generally proceed a stage further and become full of their own ways by beginning to pride themselves upon their condition and to glory in their shame. Not that they really are satisfied at heart—on the contrary, they have a suspicion that things are not quite as they ought to be, and therefore, they put on a bold front and try to deceive themselves and others. It is rather dangerous to tell them of their faults, for they will not accept your rebuke. They will defend themselves and even carry the war into your camp. They will say, "Ah, you are puritanical, strict, and straight-laced, and your manners and ways do mischief rather than good." They would not bring up their children as you do yours, so they say. Their mouths are very full, because their hearts are empty, and they talk very loudly in defense of themselves, because their conscience has been making a great stir within them. They call sinful pleasure a little unbending of the bow, greed is prudence, covetousness is economy, and dishonesty is cleverness. It is dreadful to think that men who know better should attempt, thus, to excuse themselves. Generally, the warmest defender of a sinful practice is the man who has the most qualms of conscience about it. He himself knows that he is not living as he should, but he does not intend to cave in just yet, nor at all if he can help it. He is filled with his ways in a boasted self-content as to them.

Before long this fullness reaches another stage, for if the backslider is a gracious man at all, he encounters chastisement and that from a rod of his own making. A considerable time elapses before you can eat bread of your own growing. You have to first prepare the ground—it must be

plowed and sown. Then the wheat has to come up to ripen and to be reaped—and threshed and ground in the mill—and the flour must be kneaded and baked in the oven. But the bread comes to the table and is eaten at last. Even so, the backslider must eat of the fruit of his own ways. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked, whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." Now look at the backslider eating the fruit of his ways. He neglected prayer, and when he tries to pray, he cannot. His powers of desire, emotion, faith, and entreaty have failed. He kneels, awhile, but he cannot pray. The Spirit of supplications is grieved and no longer helps his infirmities. He reaches down for his Bible. He commences to read a chapter, but he has disregarded the Word of God so long that he finds it to be more like a dead letter than a living voice, though it used to be a sweet book before he became a backslider. The minister, too, is altered. He used to hear him with delight, but now the poor preacher has lost all his early power, so the backslider thinks. Other people do not think so, the place is just as crowded—there are as many saints edified and sinners saved as before—but the wanderer in heart began criticizing, and now he is entangled in the habit. He criticizes everything and never feeds upon the truth at all. Like a madman at table, he puts his fork into the morsel and holds it up, looks at it, finds fault with it, and throws in on the floor. Nor does he act better towards the saints in whose company he once delighted—they are dull society and he shuns them. Of all the things which bear upon his spiritual life, he is weary. He has trifled with them and now he cannot enjoy them. Hear him sing, or rather sigh—

"Your saints are comforted, I know,
And love Your house of prayer.
I sometimes go where others go,
But find no comfort there."

How can it be otherwise? He is drinking water out of his own cistern and eating the bread of which he sowed the corn some years ago. His ways have come home to him.

Chastisement also comes out of his conduct in other ways. He was very worldly and gave lively parties—and his daughters have grown up and grieved him by their conduct. He, himself, went into sin, and now that his sons outdo his example, what can he say? Can he wonder at anything? Look at David's case. David fell into a gross sin and soon Amnon, his son, rivaled him in iniquity. He murdered Uriah the Hittite, and Absalom murdered his brother, Amnon. He rebelled against God, and lo, Absalom lifted up the standard of revolt against him. He disturbed the relationships of another man's family in a disgraceful manner, and behold, his own family was torn in pieces and never restored to peace—so that even when he lay a-dying, he had to say, "My house is not so with God." He was filled with his own ways, and it always will be so, even if the sin is forgotten. If you have sent forth a dove or a raven from the ark of your soul, it will come back to you just as you sent it out. May God save us from being backsliders, lest the smooth current of our life should turn into a raging torrent of woe.

The fourth stage, blessed be God, is at length reached by gracious men and women, and what a mercy it is they ever do reach it! At last,

they become filled with their own ways in another sense, namely, satiated and dissatisfied, miserable and discontent. They sought the world and they gained it, but now it has lost all charms to them. They went after other lovers, but these deceivers have been false to them, and they wring their hands and say, "Oh that I could return to my first husband for it was better with me, then, than now." Many have lived at a distance from Jesus Christ, but now they can bear it no longer—they cannot be happy till they return. Hear them cry in the language of the 51st Psalm, "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit." But, I tell you, they cannot get back very easily. It is hard to retrace your steps from backsliding, even if it is but a small measure of it. And to get back from great wanderings is hard, indeed—much harder than going over the road the first time. I believe that if the mental sufferings of some returning backsliders could be written and faithfully published, they would astound you, and be a more horrible story to read than all the torments of the Inquisition. What racks a man is stretched upon who has been unfaithful to his covenant with God! What fires have burned within the souls of those men and women who have been untrue to Christ and His cause! What dungeons, what grim and dark prisons have saints of God lain in who have gone aside into By-Path meadow instead of keeping to the King's Highway. Their sighs and cries, for which, after all they have learned to be thankful, are sorrowful and terrible to listen to, and make us learn that he who sins must smart, and especially if he is a child of God, for the Lord has said of His people, "You only have I known of all the people of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities." Whoever may go unchastened, a child of God never shall—the Lord will let His adversaries do a thousand things and not punish them in this life, since He reserves vengeance for them in the life to come. But as for His own children, they cannot sin without being visited with stripes.

Beloved friends, let us all go straight away to the cross at once for fear we should be backsliders—

"Come, let us to the Lord our God
With contrite hearts return.
Our God is gracious, nor will leave
The penitent to mourn."

Let us confess every degree and form of backsliding, every wandering of heart, every decline of love, every wavering of faith, every flagging of zeal, every dullness of desire, every failure of confidence. Behold, the Lord says unto us, "Return." Therefore, let us return. Even if we are not backsliders, it will do us no harm to come to the cross as penitents. Indeed, it is well to abide there forevermore. O Spirit of the living God, preserve us in believing penitence all our days.

II. I have but little time for the second part of my text. Excuse me, therefore, if I do not attempt to go into it very deeply. As it is true of the backslider, that he grows, at last, full of that which is within him, and his wickedness, it is true, also, of THE CHRISTIAN, that in pursuing the paths of righteousness and the way of faith, he becomes filled and content, too. That which grace has placed within him fills him in due time.

Here, then, we have the good man's name and history.

Notice first, *his name*. It is a very remarkable thing that as a backslider, if you call out his name, he will not, as a rule, answer to it. Even so, a good man will not acknowledge the title here assigned him. Where is the good man? Know that every man here who is right before God will pass the question on, saying, "There is none good, save One, that is God." The good man will also question my text and say, "I cannot feel satisfied with myself." No, dear friend, but mind you, read the words correctly. It does not say, "satisfied *with* himself." No truly good man ever was self-satisfied, and when any talk as if they are self-satisfied, it is time to doubt whether they know much about the matter. All the good men I have ever met with have always wanted to be better—they have longed for something higher than as yet they have reached. They would not own to it that they were satisfied and they certainly were, by no means, satisfied with themselves. The text does not say that they are, but it says something that reads so much like it that care is needed. Now, if I should seem to say, this morning, that a good man looks within and is quite satisfied with what he finds there, please let me say at once, I mean nothing of the sort. I should like to say exactly what the text means, but I do not know quite whether I shall manage to do it, except you will help me by not misunderstanding me, even if there should be a strong temptation to do so. Here is the good man's history—he is "satisfied *from* himself"—but first I must read his name again, though he does not own to it, what is he good for?

He says, "Good for nothing," but in truth he is good for much when the Lord uses him. Remember that he is good because the Lord has made him over again by the Holy Spirit. Is not that good which God makes? When He created nature at first, He said of all things that they were very good. How could they be otherwise, since He made them? So in the new creation, a new heart and right spirit are from God and must be good. Where there is grace in the heart the grace is good and makes the heart good. A man who has the righteousness of Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is good in the sight of God.

A good man is on the side of good. If I were to ask, who is on the side of good? We would not pass on that question. No, we would step out and say "I am. I am not all I ought to be, or wish to be, but I am on the side of justice, truth, and holiness. I would live to promote goodness and even die rather than become the advocate of evil." And what is the man who loves that which is good? Is he evil? I think not. He who truly loves that which is good must be, in a measure, good himself. Who is he that strives to be good and groans and sighs over his failures, yes, and rules his daily life by the laws of God? Is he not one of the world's best men? I trust, without self-righteousness, the grace of God has made some of us good in this sense, for what the Spirit of God has made is good, and if in Christ Jesus we are new creatures, we cannot contradict Solomon, nor criticize the Bible if it calls such persons good, though we dare not call ourselves good.

Now, a good man's history is this, "He is satisfied from himself."

That means, first, that he is independent of outward circumstances. He does not derive satisfaction from his birth, or honors, or properties.

That which fills him with content is within himself. Our hymn puts it so truly—

"I need not go abroad for joys,
I have a feast at home,
My sighs are turned into songs,
My heart has ceased to roam.
Down from above the blessed Dove
Is come into my breast,
To witness Your eternal love
And give my spirit rest."

Other men must bring music from abroad if they have any, but in the gracious man's bosom there lives a little bird that sings sweetly to him. He has a flower in his own garden more sweet than any he could buy in the market or find in the king's palace. He may be poor, but he would not change his estate in the kingdom of heaven for all the grandeur of the rich. His joy and peace are not even dependent upon the health of his body—he is often well in soul when sick as to his flesh—he is frequently full of pain and yet perfectly satisfied. He may carry about with him an incurable disease, which he knows will shorten and eventually end his life, but he does not look to this poor life for satisfaction. He carries that within him that which creates immortal joy—the love of God shed abroad in his soul by the Holy Spirit yields a perfume sweeter than the flowers of Paradise. The fulfillment of the text is partly found in the fact that the good man is independent of his surroundings.

And he is also independent of the praise of others. The backslider is comfortable because the minister thinks well of him and Christian friends think well of him. But the genuine Christian who is living near to God thinks little of the verdict of men. What other people think of him is not his chief concern—he is sure that he is a child of God. He knows he can say, "Abba, Father." He glories that for him to live is Christ and to die is gain. And therefore, he does not need the approval of others to buoy up his confidence. He runs alone and does not need, like a weakly child, to be carried in arms. He knows whom he has believed and his heart rests in Jesus—thus, he is satisfied, not from other people and from their judgment—but "from himself."

Then, again, the Christian man is content with the well of upspringing water of life which the Lord has placed within him. There, my brethren, up on the everlasting hills is the divine reservoir of all-sufficient grace, and down here in our bosom is a spring which bubbles up unto everlasting life. It has been welling up in some of us these 25 years, but why is it so? The grand secret is that there is an unbroken connection between the little spring within the renewed breast and that vast unfathomed fountain of God—and because of this, the well-spring never fails—in summer and in winter, it still continues to flow. And now if you ask me if I am dissatisfied with the spring within my soul, which is fed by the all-sufficiency of God, I reply, no, I am not. If you could, by any possibility, cut the connection between my soul and my Lord, I should despair altogether. But as long as none can separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, I am satisfied and at rest. Like Naphtali, we are, "satisfied with favor and full of the blessing of the Lord."

Faith is in the good man's heart and he is satisfied with what faith brings him, for it conveys to him the perfect pardon of his sin. Faith brings him nearer to Christ. Faith brings him adoption into the family of God. Faith secures him conquest over temptation. Faith procures for him everything he requires. He finds that by believing, he has all the blessings of the covenant to enjoy daily. Well may he be satisfied with such an enriching grace. The just shall live by faith.

In addition to faith, he has another filling grace called hope, which reveals to him the world to come and gives him assurance that when he falls asleep, he will sleep in Jesus—and that when he awakes he will arise in the likeness of Jesus. Hope delights him with the promise that his body shall rise and that in his flesh he shall see God. This hope of his sets the pearly gates wide open before him, reveals the streets of gold, and makes him hear the music of the celestial harpers. Surely a man may well be satisfied with this.

The godly heart is also satisfied with what love brings him, for love, though it seems but a gentle maid, is strong as a giant and becomes, in some respects, the most potent of all the graces. Love first opens wide herself like the flowers in the sunshine and drinks in the love of God, and then she joys in God and begins to sing—

"I am so glad that Jesus loves me."

She loves Jesus, and there is such an interchange of delight between the love of her soul to Christ and the love of Christ to her that heaven itself can scarcely be sweeter. He who knows this deep mysterious love will be more than filled with it—he will need to be enlarged to hold the bliss which it creates. The love of Jesus is known, but yet it passes knowledge. It fills the entire man so that he has no room for the idolatrous love of the creature. He is satisfied from himself and asks no other joy.

Beloved, when the good man is enabled, by divine grace, to live in obedience to God, he must, as a necessary consequence, enjoy peace of mind. His hope is alone fixed on Jesus, but a life which evidences his possession of salvation casts many a sweet ingredient into his cup. He who takes the yoke of Christ upon him and learns of Him finds rest unto his soul. When we keep His commandments, we consciously enjoy His love which we could not do if we walked in opposition to His will. To know that you have acted from a pure motive, to know that you have done the right is a grand means of full content. What matters the frown of foes or the prejudice of friends, if the testimony of a good conscience is heard within? We dare not rely upon our own works—neither have we had a desire or need to do so—for our Lord Jesus has saved us everlastingly. Still, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."

The Christian needs to maintain unbroken fellowship with Jesus, his Lord, if he would be good as a soldier of Christ. If his communion is broken, his satisfaction will depart. If Jesus is within, we shall be satisfied from within, but no way else. If our fellowship with Him is kept up—and it may be from day to day, and month to month, and year to year, (and why should it ever be snapped at all?)—then the satisfaction will contin-

ue and the soul will continue to be full even to the brim with the bliss which God alone can give. If we are, by the Holy Spirit, made to be abundant in labor or patient in suffering—if, in a word—we resign ourselves fully up to God, we shall find a fullness of His grace placed within ourselves. An enemy compared some of us to cracked vessels, and we may humbly accept the description. We do find it difficult to retain good things—they run away from our leaking pitchers. But I will tell how a cracked pitcher can be kept continually full. Put it in the bottom of an ever-flowing river and it must be full. Even so, though we are leaking and broken, if we abide in the love of Christ, we shall be filled with His fullness. Such an experience is possible. We may be—

"Plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea,
And lost in His immensity,"

Then we shall be full, full to running over as the Psalmist says, "My cup runs over." The man who walks in God's ways, obediently resting wholly upon Christ, looking for all His supplies to the great eternal deeps—that is the man who will be filled—filled with the very things which he has chosen for his own. He will be filled with those things which are his daily delight and desire. Well may the faithful believer be filled, for he has eternity to fill him. The Lord has loved him with an everlasting love—there is the eternity past. "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My covenant shall not depart from you"—there is the eternity to come. He has infinity, yes, the infinite One Himself, for the Father is his Father, the Son is his Savior, the Spirit of God dwells within him—the Trinity may well fill the heart of man. The believer has omnipotence to fill him, for all power is given unto Christ, and of that power Christ will give to us according as we have need. Living in Christ and hanging upon Him from day to day, beloved, we shall have a "peace of God which passes all understanding to keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." May we enjoy this peace and magnify the name of the Lord forever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 15:1-17.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—757, 775, 809.

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THE BEST HOUSE-VISITATION
NO. 1236

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 23, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and they told Him about her at once. And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. And at evening, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door."
Mark 1:29-33.

WE see before us small beginnings and grand endings. One man is called by the voice of Jesus, and then another. The house in which they dwell is consecrated by the Lord's presence, and by-and-by, the whole city is stirred from end to end with the name and fame of the Great Teacher. We are often wishing that God would do some great thing in the world, and we look abroad for instruments which we think would be peculiarly fit and think of places where the work might suitably begin. It might be quite as well if we asked the Lord to make use *of us* and if we were believingly to hope that even our feeble instrumentality might produce great results by His power. And it would honor Him if we asked that *our abode* might become the central point from which streams of blessing should flow forth to refresh the neighborhood.

Peter's house was by no means the most notable building in the town of Capernaum. It was probably not the poorest dwelling in the place, for Peter had a boat of his own, or perhaps a half share in a boat with his brother Andrew. Or possibly he and Andrew and James and John were proprietors of some two or three fishing boats, for they were partners and they appear to have employed hired servants (Mark 1:20). Still Peter was not rich nor famous. He was neither a ruler of the synagogue, nor an eminent scribe, and his house was not at all remarkable among the habitations which made up the little fishing suburb down by the seashore. Yet to this house did Jesus go. He had foreknown and chosen it of old and had resolved to make it renowned by His presence and miraculous power. There hung the fisherman's nets outside the door—the sole escutcheon and coat of arms of one who was ordained to sit upon a throne and judge with his fellow apostles the 12 tribes of Israel. Beneath that lowly roof, Emmanuel deigned to unveil Himself—God With Us showed Himself God with Simon. Little did Peter know how divine a blessing entered his house when Jews crossed the threshold, nor how vast a river of mercy would stream forth from his door down the streets of Capernaum. Now,

dear friend, it may be that your dwelling, though very dear to you, is not very much thought of by anybody else. No poet or historian has ever written its annals, nor artist engraved its image. Perhaps it is not the very poorest cottage in the place in which you live. Still, it is obscure enough and no one, as he rides along, asks, "Who dwells there?" or, "What a remarkable house that is." Yet is there any reason why the Lord should not visit you and make your house like that of Obededom, in which the Ark abode, or like that of Zacchaeus, to which salvation came? Our Lord can make your dwelling the center of mercy for the whole region—a little sun scattering light in all directions—a spiritual dispensary distributing health to the multitudes around. There is no reason except in yourself why the Lord should not make your residence in a city a greater blessing to it than the cathedral and all its clergy. Jesus cares not for fine buildings and carved stones. He will not disdain to come beneath your cottage roof, and stopping there, He will bring a treasury of blessings with Him which shall enrich your house and shall ensure the richest of blessings to your neighbors. Why should it not be? Have you faith to pray, this moment, that it may be so? How much do I wish you would! More good, by far, will be done by a silent prayer now offered by yourself to that effect than by anything which can be spoken by me. If every Christian here will now put up the supplication, "Lord, dwell where I dwell, and in so doing make my house a blessing to the neighborhood," marvelous results must follow.

I am going to speak of three things this morning. The first is, *How grace came to Peter's house;* secondly, *what grace did when it got there*; and thirdly, *how grace flowed forth from Peter's house*.

I. HOW GRACE CAME TO PETER'S HOUSE. The first link in the chain of causes was that *a relative was converted*. Andrew had heard John the Baptist preach and had been impressed. The text which was blessed to him was probably, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Andrew followed Jesus, and having become a disciple, he desired to lead others to be disciples, too. He began, as we all ought to begin, with those nearest to him by ties of relationship—"He first finds his own brother, Simon." Beloved friend, if you are yourself saved, you should look about you and inquire, "To what house may I become a messenger of salvation?" Perhaps you have no family of your own. I do not know whether Andrew had—he seems at the time of this narrative to have lived in a part of the same house as Peter—possibly they each had a house at Bethesda, which was their own city, but they lived together when they went on business to Capernaum. Perhaps Andrew had no wife and no children, I cannot tell. If it were so, I feel sure that he said to himself, "I must seek the good of my brother and his family." I believe if we are really lively and thoughtful Christians, our conversion is an omen for good to all our kinsfolk. We shall not idly say, "I ought to have looked after my own children and household, if I had any, and having none I am excused." But we shall consider ourselves to be debtors to those who are kindred householders. I hope that some Andrew is here who, being himself enlisted for Jesus, will be the means of conquering for Jesus a brother and a brother's household. If there are no Andrews, I hope some of the

Marys and Marthas will be fired with zeal to make up for the deficiency of the men and will bring brother Lazarus to the Lord. Uncles and aunts should feel an interest in the spiritual condition of nephews and nieces. Cousins should be concerned for cousins and all ties of blood should be consecrated by being used for purposes of grace. Moses, when he led the people out of Egypt, would not leave a hoof behind, nor ought we to be content to leave one kinsman a slave to sin. Abraham, in his old age, took up sword and buckler for his nephew Lot, and aged believers should look about them and seek the good of the most distant members of their families. If it were always so, the power of the gospel would be felt far and wide. The household of which Peter was master might never have known the gospel if a relative had not been converted.

This first link of grace drew on another of much greater importance, namely, that *the head of the family became a convert*. Andrew sought out his brother and spoke to him of having found the Messiah—then he brought him to Jesus and our Lord at once accepted the new recruit and gave him a new name. Peter believed and became a follower of Christ and so the head of the house was on the right side. Heads of families, what responsibilities rest upon us! We cannot shake them off—let us do what we may! God has given us little kingdoms in which our authority and influence will tell for the better or the worse to all eternity. There is not a child or a servant in our house but what will be impressed for good or evil by what we do. True, we may have no wish to influence them, and we may endeavor to ignore our responsibility, but it cannot be done—parental influence is a throne which no man can abdicate. The members of our family come under our shadow and we either drip poison upon them like a deadly upas tree, or else beneath our shade, they breathe an atmosphere perfumed with our piety. The little boats are fastened to our larger vessel and are drawn along in our wake. O fathers and mothers, the ruin of your children or their salvation will, under God, very much depend upon you. The gracious Spirit may use you for their conversion, or Satan may employ you as the instruments of their destruction. Which is it likely to be? I charge you, consider. It is a notable event in family history when the grace of God takes up its headquarters in the heart of the husband and the father—that household's story will, from then on, be written by another pen. Let those of us who are the Lord's gratefully acknowledge His mercy to us, personally, and then let us return to bless our household. If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth. Let us pray to be as clouds of grace to our families. Whether we have only an Isaac and an Ishmael, like Abraham, or 12 children like Jacob, let us pray for each and all that they may live before the Lord, and that we and all that belong to us may be bound up in the bundle of life.

Note, further, that the third step in the coming of grace to Peter's house was that after the conversion of the brother and Peter, *there were certain others converted who were partners and companions with the two brothers*. It is a great help to a man to find godly co-workers. If he must go fishing like Peter, it is a grand thing to have a James and a John as one's partners in the business. How helpful it is to piety when Christian men associate, from day to day, with their fellow Christians and speak

often, one to another, concerning the best things. Firebrands placed closely together will burn all the more freely. Coals laid in a heap will glow and blaze and so hearts touching hearts in divine things cause an inward burning and a sacred fervor seldom reached by those who walk alone. Many Christians are called to struggle hard for spiritual existence through having to work with unbelievers. They are not only sneered at and persecuted, but all sorts of doubts and blasphemies are suggested, and these materially hinder their growth in the heavenly life. When they are brought into this trial, in the course of providence, they have need of great grace to remain firm under it. Beloved brother, if in your daily business you meet with none to help but many to hinder, you must live all the nearer to God, for you require a double measure of grace. But if in the providence of God you happen to be placed where there are helpful Christian companions, do not readily change that position, even though your income would be doubled thereby. I would sooner work with James and John for twenty shillings a week than with swearers and drunkards for sixty. You who reside with really consistent Christians are much favored and ought to become eminent Christians. You are like flowers in a conservatory and you ought to bloom to perfection. You live in a lavender garden and you ought to smell sweetly. Prove that you appreciate and rightly use your privileged position by endeavoring to bring grace to your house, that it may be altogether the Lord's.

A fourth and more manifest step was taken when *Peter and his friends were drawn closer to their Lord.* The good man of the house was already saved and his brother and companions, but by the grace of God, they rose to be something more than merely saved, for they received a call to a higher occupation and a nobler service. From fishermen they were to rise into fishers of men, and from rowing in their own boats, to become pilots of the barque of the Church. Peter was already a disciple, but he was in the background. He must come to the front—he had been more a fisherman than a disciple, but now he must be more a disciple than a fisherman. He must now follow Jesus by a more open manifestation, a more constant service, a nearer communion, a more attentive discipleship, a fuller fellowship in suffering. And for this he must receive an inward preparation by the divine Spirit—he was, in fact, by the call of his Lord and Master, lifted to a higher platform altogether, upon which he would abide and learn by the Spirit what flesh and blood could never reveal.

Beloved, what a difference there may be between one Christian and another. I have sometimes seen it with astonishment and though I would not go so far as to say that I have seen as much difference between one Christian and another as between a Christian and a worldling—for there must ever be between the lowest grade of life and the fairest form of death a wider distinction than between the lowest and highest grades of life, yet still it is a very solemn difference. We know some who are saved—at least we hope they are—but oh, how few are the fruits of the Spirit. How feeble is the light they give. How slender is their consecration. How small is their likeness to Him whom they call Master and Lord. Thank God, we have seen others who live in quite another atmosphere and exhibit a far different life. It is not a higher life—I hardly like that

term—for the life of God is one and the same in all believers, but it is a higher condition of the life, more developed, more vigorous, more influential. It is a condition of life which has a clearer eye and a nimbler hand, a quicker ear and a more musical speech. It is a life of health, whereas too many only know life as laboring under disease and ready to give up the ghost. There are Mephibosheths among the king's favorites, but give me the life of Naphtali, "Satisfied with favor and full of the blessing of the Lord." Or of Asher, of whom it is written, "Let him dip his foot in oil." An owl is alive though it loves the darkness and a mole is alive though it is always digging its own grave. But give me the life of those who mount as on the wings of eagles, who live upon the fat things, full of marrow, and drink the wines on the lees well refined. These are the Mighties of Israel whose joyous energy far surpasses that of the weary and faint. These are not they whose faith is feeble and whose love is cold.

Now, Peter and his friends, at this time, had been called from their fishing tackle and their boats to abide with Jesus in His humiliation and learn of Him the secrets of the kingdom, which afterwards they were to teach to others. They had heard the Master say, "Follow Me," and they had left all at His bidding. They were in the path of fellowship, boldly pressing on at their Lord's command, so that now they had taken a grand stride in their Christian career. And that is the time, beloved, when men bring blessings on their houses. Oh, I could sigh to think of the capacities which lie dormant in some Christians! It is sad to think how their children might grow up, and with God's blessing, become pillars in the House of the Lord and perhaps ministers of the gospel, under the influence of an earnest consecrated father and mother. But instead thereof, the dullness, the lukewarmness, the worldliness, and the inconsistencies of parents are hindering the children from coming to Christ, hampering them as to any great advances in the divine life, dwarfing their stature in grace, and doing them lifelong injury. Brethren, you do not know the possibilities which are in you when God's Spirit rests upon you. But this much is certain, if you yourselves are called into a higher form of divine life, you shall then become mediums of blessing to your relatives. Your husband, your wife, your child, your friends, and the whole of your family shall be the better for your advance in spiritual things.

Now, observe further, that at this time when the Lord was about to bless the household of Peter, *He had been further instructing Peter and Andrew and James and John*, for He took them to the synagogue and they heard Him preach. A delightful sermon it was—a sermon very full of energy and very unlike the discourses of ordinary preachers, for it had authority and power about it. And it was when they came home from synagogue, after hearing such a sermon, that the blessing descended upon the house. The best of us need instruction. It is unwise for Christian people to be so busy about Christ's work that they cannot listen to Christ's words. We must be fed or we cannot feed others. The synagogue must not be deserted, if it is a synagogue where Christ is present. And oh, sometimes when the Master is present, what a power there is in the Word of God. It is not the preacher's eloquence. It is neither the flow of

language, nor the novelty of thought. There is a secret, quiet influence which enters into the soul and subdues it to the majesty of divine love. You feel the vital energy of the divine Word and it is not man's word to you, but the quickening voice of God sounding through the chambers of your spirit and making your whole being to live in His sight. At such times, the sermon is as manna from heaven, or as the bread and wine with which Melchisedec met Abraham. You are cheered and strengthened by it and go away refreshed. My dear brother, my dear sister, then is the time to go home and take your Lord home with you. Peter and his friends had so enjoyed the great Teacher's company at the synagogue that they begged Him to abide with them. And so they went straight away with Him from the synagogue into the house. Can you do that, this morning? If my Lord shall come and smile upon you and warm your hearts, do not lose Him as you go down the aisles. Do not let Him go when you reach the streets and are walking home. Do not grieve Him by chitchat about worthless matters, but take Jesus home with you. Tell Him it is noon and entreat Him to tarry with you during the heat of the day. Or if it is in the evening, tell Him the day is far spent and beseech Him to abide with you. You can always find some good reason for detaining your Lord. Do as did the spouse of old, when she said, "I found Him whom my soul loves. I held Him, and would not let Him go until I had brought Him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me." Is there not a sick one at home? Take Jesus home to her. Is there no sorrow at home? Entreat your Lord to come home to help you in your distress. Is there no sin at home? I am sure there is. Take Jesus home to purge it away. But, remember, you cannot take Him home with you unless you first have Him with you personally. Labor after this, then—be not satisfied without it. Resolve to be His servant—that I trust you are—to be His servant walking in the light as He is in the light, and having fellowship with Him. That I hope you are. And then, having gone so far, resolve that you will take Him to your friends and to your kinsfolk, so that your whole house may be blessed.

I desire, before I pass to the second point, to lay great stress upon this. We have an old proverb that charity must begin at home. Let me shape it into this—piety must begin with yourself. Before you ask salvation for your family, lay hold upon it for yourself. This is not selfishness. Indeed, the purest benevolence makes a man desire to be qualified to benefit others. And you cannot be prepared to bless others unless God has first blessed you. Is it selfishness which makes a man stand at the fountain to fill his own cup, when he intends to hand that cup round for others to drink? Is it selfishness for us to pray that in us there may be a well of water springing up unto everlasting life, when our second thought is that out of us may flow rivers of living water whereby others may be replenished? It is not selfishness to wish that the power of the Lord may be upon you, if you long to exercise that power upon the hearts of others for their good. Look you well, brethren, to yourselves. You cannot bless your children—you cannot bless your households—till, first of all, the anointing of the Lord rests upon yourselves. O Spirit of the living God,

breathe upon us that we may live yet more abundantly, and then shall we be chosen vessels to bear the name of Jesus to others.

II. Now we take the second step and show WHAT GRACE DID IN PETER'S HOUSE WHEN IT CAME THERE.

The first effect that grace produced was *it led the family to prayer*. The four friends have come in and no sooner are they in than they begin to speak with the Master, for the text tells us, "And they told Him about her at once"—of Peter's wife's mother who lay sick. I like that expression—I do not know whether you have noticed it—"And they told Him about her at once." Luke tells us, "They besought Him." I have no doubt Luke is right, but Mark is right, too. "They told Him about her at once." It looks to me as if it taught me this—that sometimes all I may do with my sore affliction is just to tell my own dear Lord about it and leave it to His loving judgement to act as He sees fit. Have you any temporal trouble or sickness in the house? Tell Jesus about it. Sometimes that is almost as much as you may do. You may beseech Him to heal that dear one, but you will have to say, "Not as I would, but as You will," and so will feel that all you may do is to tell Jesus the case and leave it with Him. He is so gentle and loving that He is sure to do the kindest thing—and the thing which is most right to do. Therefore, we may be content to "tell Him about her at once." With regard to spiritual things, we may press and be very persistent, but with regard to temporal things, we must draw a line and be satisfied when we have told Jesus and left the matter to His discretion. Some parents may, when their children are ill, plead with God in a way which shows more of nature then of grace, more clearly the affection of the mother than the resignation of the Christian, but such should not be the case. If we have committed our way unto the Lord in prayer and meekly told Him of our crisis, it will be our wisdom to be still and watch till God, the Lord, shall speak. He cannot be either unjust or unkind, therefore should we say, "Let Him do what seems good to Him."

Very likely this good woman, Peter's wife's mother, was herself a believer in Christ, but I venture to take her case as typical of spiritual success, not at all wishing, however, to insinuate that she was spiritually sick, for she may have been one of the most devoted of Christians. But now, suppose you take Jesus Christ home with you. Dear friend, if you have an unconverted one in the house, you will immediately begin to "tell Him about her at once." "They told Him about her at once." That is a very simple type of prayer, is it not? Yes, in some respects it is, and therefore, I urge you to use it. Do not say you cannot pray for your child—you can tell Jesus about her. Do not say you cannot plead for your brother or your sister—you can go in a childlike manner and tell Jesus about the case, and that is prayer. To describe your needs is often the best way of asking for help. I have known a person say to a man of whom he needed aid, "Now, I am not going to ask you for anything. I only want you to hear my story and then you may do as you like." And if he wisely tells his story, the other begins to smile and says, "You do not call that asking, I suppose?" Tell Jesus Christ all about it. His view of the matter will be to your advantage.

This elementary form of prayer is very powerful. The police do not allow people to beg in the streets, but I do not know that there is any law to prevent their sitting down in attitudes of misery and exhibiting holes at the knees of their trousers and bare feet staring through shoes with no soles. I saw that exhibition this morning. The man was not begging, but it was wonderfully like it and answered the purpose better than words. To tell Jesus Christ about your unconverted relative or friend may have in it a great deal of power. It may be, in fact, one of the most earnest things you could do because the absence of spoken pleas and arguments may arise from your being so burdened with anxiety that you cannot find words to say, "Lord relieve me." But you stand there and sigh under the burden, and those groans, which cannot be uttered, act as urgent pleas with the pitiful heart of Christ and cry aloud in His ear, "Lord, help me."

Telling Jesus is a simple mode of praying, but I think it is a very believing mode. It is as if they felt, "We only need to tell the case and our blessed Lord will attend to it. If we tell Him of her, there shall be no need to clasp His knees and cry with bitter tears for pity upon the fevered one, for as soon as He hears, so loving is His heart, He will stretch out His hand of power." Go to Jesus, then, dear friends, in that spirit, about your unconverted friend or child and "Tell Him about her."

There is something very instructive about this particular case because we are apt to think we must not tell the Lord of the more common troubles which occur in our family, but this is a great error. Too common? How can the commonness of an evil put it out of the list of proper subjects for supplication? The seaboard of Capernaum in which Peter dwelt is said, by travelers, to be a peculiarly damp, marshy, feverish place—no end of people had the fever just around the house. But Peter and Andrew did not argue that they must not tell the Lord because it was a common disease. Do not let Satan get an advantage over you by persuading you to keep back commonplace troubles or sins from your loving Lord. Beloved, if He counts the hairs of your heads, if not a sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge, depend upon it, your most common trouble will be sympathized in by Him. "In *all* their afflictions He was afflicted." It is a great mistake to think you may not carry to your Redeemer the ordinary trials of the day. Tell Him, yes, tell Him all. If your child is only a common sinner, if there is no unusual depravity in him, if your son has never grieved you by perverseness, if your daughter has always been amiable and gentle, do not think there is no need to pray. If it is only a common case of the fever of sin, yet it will be deadly in the end unless a balm is found—therefore, tell Jesus of it at once. Do not wait till your son becomes a prodigal, pray at once! Do not delay till your child is at death's door, pray now!

But sometimes a difficulty arises from the other side of the matter. Peter's wife's mother was attacked by no ordinary fever. We are told it was "a great fever"—the expression used implies that she was burning with fever—and she was intensely debilitated, for she was laid or prostrate. Now the devil will sometimes insinuate, "It is of no use for you to take such a case to Jesus. Your son has acted so shamefully, your daughter is so willful—such a case will never yield to divine grace in answer to

prayer." Do not be held back by this wicked suggestion. Our Lord Jesus Christ can rebuke great fevers and He can lift up those that are broken down and rendered powerless by raging sin. "Wonders of grace to God belong." Go and tell Jesus of the case, common or uncommon, ordinary or extraordinary, even as they told Jesus of her.

Now notice one or two reasons why we think they were driven to tell Jesus about her. I know the great reason, but I will mention the little ones first. I fancy they told Jesus about her, at first, because it was a contagious fever and it is hardly right to bring a person into a house that has a great fever in it without letting them know. If there is a great sin in your house, you may, perhaps, feel in your heart, "How can Jesus Christ come to my house while my drunken husband acts as he does?" Perhaps, more sorrowful still, the wife drinks in secret and the husband, who sees it with deep regret, says, "How can I expect the Lord to bless us?" Or perhaps some great, sad sin has defiled your child and you may well say, "How can I expect the Lord to smile on this house? I might as well expect a man to come into a house which is infected with typhus fever." Never mind. Tell Jesus all about it and He will come, fever or no fever, sin or no sin.

I think, perhaps, they told Him about her because it would be some excuse for the scantiness of the entertainment they were likely to give. What could Peter and Andrew do at preparing a meal? The principal person in the house was ill and could not serve. We poor men are miserable hands at spreading a table—we need a Mary or a Martha to help us, or a Peter's wife, or a Peter's wife's mother. And so they say, with long faces, "Good Master, we would gladly entertain You well, but she who would delight to serve You is sick." How often a family is hindered from entertaining Christ through some sick soul that is in the house. "O Lord, we would have family prayer, but we cannot—the husband will not permit it." "Lord, we would make this household ring with Your praises, but we should make one tenant of it so angry that we are obliged to be quiet." "We cannot give You a feast, good Lord. We have to set before You a little as best we can, or the house would grow too hot to hold us." Never mind. Tell Jesus about it and Jesus will come and sup with you, and turn the impediment into an assistance.

Moreover, the faces of the friends looked so sad. I dare say while in the synagogue Peter had almost forgotten about his wife's mother, he had been so pleased with the preaching. But when he reached home, the first question when he crossed the door was, "How is she now?" The servants replied, "Alas, master, the fever rages terribly." Down went Peter's spirits. A cloud came over his countenance and he turned to Jesus and cried, "Good Master, I cannot help being sad, even though You are here, for my wife's mother, whom I love much, is sick of a fever." That sadness may have helped Peter to "tell Him about her."

But I think the grand reason was this, that our blessed Lord had such a sympathetic heart that He always drew everybody's grief out of them. Men could not keep anything to themselves where He was. He looked like one who was so much like yourself, so much in all points tried like as you are, that you could not help telling Him. I exhort you that love my

Lord to allow His sweet sympathy to extract from you the grief which wrings your heart. Let it constrain you to tell Him of your unconverted relative. He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, He loved the souls of men and died for them, therefore, He can tenderly enter into the anxieties which you feel for rebellious souls hardened in sin. Therefore, "tell Him about her."

I think, however, that they told Him of her because they expected that He would heal her. Tell Jesus about your child, or your friend who is unconverted, and expect that He will look upon them with an eye of love. He can save. It is like Him to do it. He delights to do it. It will honor Him to do it. Expect Him to do it and tell Him the case of your unregenerate friend this very day.

May I put the question all round? You have, each of you, probably, someone left in your family unsaved and you have said, "I was in hopes that this one would be converted." Have you ever told Jesus of her or of him? Oh, I hope you can answer, "Yes, I have many times." But it is just possible you have not made a set business of it. Begin now, and go upstairs and take time every day to tell the Lord every bit about Jane, or Mary, or Thomas, or John. Wrestle with God, if need be, all night long, and say, "I will not let You go except You bless me." I do not think that many of you will be very long with that trouble to carry when you have, in that manner, told it to your Lord. This is what they did when Jesus came. *Immediately* they told Him of her, for the word, "Anon," is really, in the Greek, "Immediately." Directly Christ went in, they told Him of her, and directly Christ went to heal her.

So the first work grace worked in the house was it led them to pray, and secondly, *this led the Savior to heal their sick*. He went into the chamber, spoke a word, gave a touch, lifted up the sick woman, and she was restored. And the wonderful thing was she was able to rise from the bed immediately and wait upon them. This never occurs in the cure of a fever, for when a fever goes, it leaves the patient very weak and he needs days and weeks, and sometimes months, before he recovers his strength. But the cures of Christ are perfect. And so, at once the patient rose and ministered unto them.

Thus, we see that when grace came into that house and worked its cure *it quite transformed the family*. Look at the difference. There is the poor woman, the patient, shivering and then again, burning for the fever is on her. She can scarcely lift hand or foot. Now look at her. She is busily serving, with a smiling face. No one is more happy or healthy than she. So when God's grace comes, the one who has been the object of the most anxiety becomes the happiest of all. The sinner, saved by sovereign grace, becomes a servant of the Lord. The patient becomes the hostess.

Note the change in the rest of them. They had all been heavy of heart, but now they are rejoicing. There is no anxiety on Peter's face now. Andrew is no more troubled—the skeleton in the closet has disappeared, the sickness has been chased out—and they can all sing a gladsome hymn. The house is changed from a hospital to a church, from an infirmary to a banqueting hall. The Lord Himself seems changed, too, if change can come over Him, for from a physician going carefully into a

sick room, He comes forth a King who has subdued an enemy and they all look upon Him with wonder and reverence as the mighty Lord, victorious over invisible spirits. Now, I pray God that our household may be transformed and transfigured in this way. I pray that our Luz may become a Bethel, our valley of Achor, a door of hope, our sons of perverseness, a seed to serve the Lord. If you yourself get a fullness of grace, the next step is for your *families* to receive of the boundless fullness till not one shall be soul-sick at home, but all shall be happy in the Lord and all, all shall serve Him.

III. When mercy had once entered, let us see HOW GRACE FLOWED FORTH FROM THE HOUSE. They could not keep the fact hidden indoors that Peter's wife's mother was cured. I do not know who told about it. Had it been in our day, I should have thought it was one of the servants over the railings of the backyard, where they are so fond of talking, or perhaps some friend who came in and was told the news. Perhaps the doctor called round to see the good woman, and to his utter astonishment, found her up and about the house. He goes to his next patient and says, "My business will soon come to an end. My patient, who had fever yesterday, has been made perfectly whole by one, Jesus, a Prophet of Nazareth." Somehow or other it oozed out. You cannot keep the grace of God a secret. It will reveal itself. You need not advertise your religion—live it—and other people will talk about it. It is good to speak for Christ whenever you have a fair opportunity, but your life will be the best sermon.

The story went through the town and a poor man on crutches thought to himself, "I will hobble out to Peter's house!" Another who used to creep through the streets on all fours quietly whispered, "I will go to Peter's house and see." Others, moved by the same impulse, started for the same place. Many who had sick ones said, "We will carry our friends to Peter's house." So the house grew popular and lo, around the door there was such a sight as Peter had never seen before. It was a great hospital. All down the street patients were clamoring to see the great Prophet. "And all the city was gathered together at the door." And now, what do you say about Peter's house? We began with calling it a humble lodging where a fisherman dwelt. Why, it has become a royal hospital, a palace of mercy. Here they come with every kind of sickness. Lepers, cripples, the lame and withered—and there is the loving Master—moving here and there till He has healed every one of them. The streets of Capernaum rang that night with songs of joy. There was dancing of a new kind in the streets, for the lame man was leaping. And the music that accompanied the dancing was of a new kind, too, for then did the tongues of the dumb sing, "Glory be to God." It was out of Peter's house that all this mercy came.

Ah, brethren, I would to God He would look first on Peter and then on Peter's wife's mother, or Peter's child or relative, and then on the whole house, and then from the house cause an influence to stream forth and to be felt by all the neighborhood. "It cannot be so with my home," says one. Why not, dear brother? If you are straitened at all, you are not straitened in God—you are straitened in yourself. "But I live in a place,"

says one, "where the ministry is lifeless." The more reason why you should be a blessing to the town. "Oh, but I live where many active Christians are doing a great deal of good." The more reason why you should be encouraged to do good, too. "Oh, but ours is an aristocratic neighborhood." They need the gospel most of all. How few of the great and mighty are ever saved! "Oh, but ours is such a low neighborhood." That is just the place where the gospel is likely to meet with a glad reception, for the poor have the gospel preached to them and they will hear it. You cannot invent an excuse which will hold water for a moment—God can make your house to be the center of blessing to all who dwell around it—if you are willing to have it so. But the way to have it so I have described: First, you must yourself be saved, yourself called to the highest form of life, yourself warmed in heart by the presence of your Master. Then your family must be blessed and after that the widening circle around your habitation. Oh that it might be so. I know some brethren who, wherever they are, are burning and shining lights, but I know some others who are lamps, but it would be difficult to say whether they are lit or not. I think I see a flicker, but I am not sure. Brethren, aspire to be abundantly useful. Do you wish to live ignoble lives? Do you wish to be bound to the loathsome carcass of a dead Christianity? I abhor lukewarmness from my very soul—let us have done with it! We have a very short time in which to bear our testimony. We shall soon be at rest—let us tell the world while we can. The shadows are lengthening, the day is drawing to a close. Up! Brethren, up! If you are to bring jewels to Jesus, if you are to crown His head with many crowns, up, I pray you, labor for Him while you can.

There are some here who are unconverted. I have not spoken to them, but I have tried to set you all speaking to them. Will you do it, or shall I keep you to hear the second half of my sermon? No, I will trust you to deliver it and may God bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 1:14-45.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—89 (PART II), 391, 394.

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HOW THEY CONQUERED THE DRAGON
NO. 1237

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 30, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Revelation 12:11.

IT is not my main object, at this time, to expound the chapter before us. I scarcely consider myself qualified to explain any part of the Book of Revelation and none of the expositions I have ever seen entice me to attempt the task, for they are mostly occupied with a refutation of all the interpretations which have gone before—and each one seems to be very successful, indeed, in proving that all the rest know nothing at all about the matter. The sum total of substantial instruction in nearly all the comments upon Revelation amounts to this—that our heavenly Father has said in His Word some mysterious things which few of His children can yet comprehend. This is just what we might have expected when the infinite God speaks to finite men. It is, no doubt, intended to humble us and draw forth our reverent adoration. Happily there is a blessing to those who read and hear and keep the words of His prophecy, for had that blessing been confined to those who understand it, few would have obtained the benediction. The Revelation is a most blessed book, but its unfolding has yet to be accomplished. If you refer to the expositors you will find that they discover, in this passage, the dragon-ensign of pagan Rome and its removal from its position by Constantine, who set up the cross in its stead. I do not believe the Lord took any more interest in Constantine than in any other sinner and it seems to me little short of blasphemous to say that he was the man-child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron and was caught up into God and to His throne. His adoption of Christianity as the state religion was not a thing for glorified spirits to rejoice in, but a dreadful calamity, fitted only to make sport for Pandemonium. No one ever did the church a worse turn than he who first joined her to the state. The act was a piece of state policy and kingcraft and no more—a business utterly unworthy of record by an inspired pen.

It would be unprofitable to follow great interpreters through the history of the Roman empire, all of which they find in the visions of John—such an exercise would be more suitable to another day and would rather come under the head of history than theology. I can only give you what it occurs to me that you and I would have understood by the vision if it had been granted to us. It does not appear to me to be a portion of a consecutive revelation, but a sort of summary of the visions which follow it and in some respects, a preface to them. Remember that it is a vision and is not to be interpreted in cold blood, word by word, or read as if its

coherence and connection would always be apparent. In this chapter we may see, as in a panorama, the entire conflict between the principles of good and evil, between God and Satan. We have before us the old original quarrel between the woman and the serpent with which the inspired volume commences, and a clear development of the first promise, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed."

Woman, in her innocence, was attacked by "that old serpent called the devil, and Satan," and she readily enough fell a prey to his deceptions, to the utter ruin of our race. At the end of that first crafty assault and speedy victory, the dragon met with his rebuff in words like these—"The seed of the woman shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel," a promise which declared that, though the woman's seed must suffer greatly at Satan's hand in consequence of sin, yet He would conquer in the end and destroy the power of evil. In the Revelation, the scene is changed from Eden to the heavens and there before you stand, again, the woman and the serpent in the same position of antagonism as before, the serpent still the assailant, only this time more openly so. Observe how both woman and serpent have developed—the one has become a queen bedecked with celestial splendor, and the other a python with a tail so vast that he threatens to obliterate the stars with every sweep of it. The woman is no longer a simple, childlike personage, but *a wonder.* She walks not among the trees and the flowers, but amid the orbs of heaven. She is clothed with the sun, the moon is under her feet, and upon her head is a coronet of 12 stars. In her you see the great cause of truth and righteousness embodied—she is, in fact, the church of God in all ages, the woman whose seed blesses all the nations of the earth. The glorious cause of holiness and God, incarnated in the church, is clothed with the splendor of light, and truth, and majesty. We will not stay to explain the details of the gorgeous imagery, for in such a matter it is almost frivolity to go into detail. The church has her greater and her lesser lights—she is covered with the underived splendor of indwelling Deity, and her walk is bright with the reflected glory of holiness—while her crown of joy is found in her complete ministry as represented by the apostolic twelve. She is fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. Behold, then, the typical woman, and see how glorious is the cause of truth and holiness.

In the vision the queenly woman is about to bring forth the promised seed. She cries in her anguish, "travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered." This, of course, may represent the church crying day and night unto God in times gone by for the coming of the promised deliverer—a cry which increased in intensity and agony of desire as the time drew on. But it may also depict the constant condition of a true church—always travailing in birth till Christ is formed in the hearts of men. Till the manchild, namely, Christ mystical, is born here below; till the Christ is so brought forth among the sons of men that He and all those who by grace, are enabled to overcome the wicked one, shall rule the nations with a rod of iron. (Rev 2:26, 27).

You see, then, in vision the woman, the church, and before her stands another wonder—the serpent mightily developed. He is called a great red

dragon—huge in bulk and terrible in appearance is this emblem of evil, and he is clothed with the horrible splendor peculiar to himself—the splendor of deadly hate and imperious rebellion. Bright and burning, like flames of fire, the huge serpent is terrible to gaze upon. The python is red with wrath, and encrimsoned with persecuting malice. Red is the color of Edom, the adversary of the Lord and of His Israel—and it is still the chosen color of the monstrous power of antichrist which holds its court at Rome. What is the last of its evil gifts to our own country but a red hat for its arch-priest? This great red dragon is full of craft, for it has seven heads. One Satanic head were enough, but our great enemy possesses an almost perfect ingenuity of wickedness. He uses a wisdom all but infinite to effect the overthrow of the church of God and the destruction of Christ and the rest of the heaven-born seed among men! These seven heads are supplemented by 10 horns, the emblems of power, for the prince of the power of the air is by no means weak. He has, in fact, more power than wisdom, having but seven heads to ten horns and yet according to the order of nature, each head should have two horns, we may also say that he has not power enough to execute all that his wicked cunning enables him to invent. By the power wielded by the dragon, he leads men to rebel against the law of the Lord, and induces them to persecute the church. The power of evil is great in all lands, and as opposed to a defenseless woman in a sorrowful condition, it seems quite impossible that she should stand against it. The heads are also crowned, for Satan sways with more than regal power the minds of men—he is the god of this world—it lies in the wicked one. He delights to display that power and trusts much to outward pomp, therefore he wears seven crowns upon his seven heads, as if one diadem were not sufficient to denote his kingship. His enormous energy is also set forth by his lashing the skies in his fury and tearing down a third part of the stars—it is evermore his ambition to deepen darkness and destroy light—and terribly successful has he been in this, his choicest pastime.

See, then, before you, the woman in her brightness and loveliness, and the dragon in his rage and power. The dragon is watching for the expected birth. He is eager to devour the man-child as soon as it is born—the ideal man, the offspring of the divine life—he longs to destroy. It was so when our Lord Jesus was born—Satan stirred up Herod to seek the young child and therefore, the massacre of the innocents. But the dragon was foiled—Jesus lived till His hour was come—and then He was caught up unto God and to His throne. Thus also Satan strove to devour the new-born seed, when the converts to Christ were few, and His mystical body upon earth was like unto that of a little child. He persecuted the man-child when first the gospel was preached, but the more his servants persecuted the saints, the more they multiplied. The method followed by Pharaoh in Egypt was a crafty one, but it did not and could not succeed. Persecution always fails.

Today, brethren, the man-child, even our Lord Jesus, is caught up unto God and sits upon His throne and in part, also, the mystical body of Christ is there, far beyond the reach of the dragon. Jesus reigns with His saints in a region in which there is no more place for the dragon, a do-

main from which he is forever cast out into the earth. All the power which Satan ever had in heavenly things is now ended by the finished work of our ascended Lord—

"Bruised is the serpent's head
Hell is vanquished, death is dead
And to Christ gone up on high
Captive is captivity."

By reason of our sin and his own power over death, Satan shut heaven against us, but now the battle in the higher regions between the dragon and the woman's seed is over and we are in the heavenly places and Satan banished forever. There is no condemnation unto us any more, nor a foot for the evil one to stand upon, now that we are in Christ. When we read here, "heaven," do not understand, by it, the place of the blessed, where God dwells, but the spiritual region, the realm of spiritual things. The first fight between truth and error lies in purely spiritual matters, in those heavenly places into which Christ has lifted up His church. It is a wrestling between good and evil spirits and not a contention with flesh and blood. We find angels first entering into this strife. We know but little about it, but it would seem that the great dragon of evil has made war with angels as well as with men. Milton sang of those angelic conflicts in majestic verse, but Milton was not inspired to speak infallibly, and we must take heed not to confuse poets with prophets. It is clear that good and evil spirits are at necessary variance one with another and it is also clear that in ages gone by Satan tempted the angelic band. And those angels which kept the first estate were victorious over him once and for all. They rejected his sinful solicitations and now he has no more power over them. Never again can he tempt them—they shall stand fast forever—confirmed in their blessed estate. Michael and his angels have defeated the devil and his angels in one decisive battle and by remaining true to their allegiance have chased away from angelic realms the invading power of evil.

Dwelling in the spirit realms, there are others besides angels, our brethren who have left the body, the saints of ancient times and the faithful of the early church. These, also, dwell in a region out of which Satan is expelled. He cannot molest them anymore. The text bids us hear the glorified chanting of the song of victory over Satan, forever cast down from the realms of the blessed and never again to enter into the spiritual domain to vex them. "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." To the singers of this song I want to call your attention and mainly to one point concerning them. They have conquered Satan. I want you to observe this and to note the weapons by which they overcame.

Leaving all the rest, we will pay our attention to the victors and the weapons by which they won the day. First, we shall notice that *the blessed ones before the throne were all warriors and victors.* Secondly, *they all fought with the same weapons.* And thirdly, *they all fought the same spirit.*

I. First, ALL THE BLESSED ONES WHO ARE REJOICING IN HEAVEN WERE ONCE WARRIORS AND VICTORS HERE BELOW. It is a very simple truth to mention, but we need to be reminded of it—

"Once they were a mourning liege below,
And wet their couch with tears;
They wrestled hard, as we do now,
With sins and doubts and fears."

We, too, often think of the saints that have gone before as if they were men of another race from ourselves, capable of nobler things, endowed with graces which we cannot reach, and adorned with holiness impossible to us. The medieval artists were apt to paint the saints with rings of glory about their heads. But, indeed, they had no such halos. Their brows were furrowed with care, even as ours and their hair grew gray with grief. Their light was within and we may have it. Their glory was by grace and the same grace is available for us. They were men of like passions with ourselves, "our brethren," though a little elder born. It is clear from our text that every one of the saints in heaven was *assailed* by Satan. How could there be a victory without a battle? They were all attacked by one or other of the dragon's heads and horns. When you suffer from a fearful temptation which almost staggers you, count it no strange thing. Be not dismayed as though a new temptation had befallen you. That fiery dart had been aimed at other men's hearts before it was caught upon your shield. If the insinuation should happen to be profane and blasphemous to a very high degree, so that you condemn yourself and say, "No other human mind could ever have been defiled with so foul a suggestion as this," do not despond, for such suggestions have been injected into the minds of the purest, even as the worst of thieves may seek to enter the house of the most honest man in the city. Even to those who, at this moment, are without fault before the throne of God, it happened while here below that horrible temptations assailed them. Satan always has been, since his fall, a tempter of the worst order—and ever since he first beguiled our mother, Eve—he has gone on to ensnare men's souls with the same craft, the same cruelty, the same falsehood, and the same impiety against the Lord. It will help you, if you reflect that you are not alone, and the pathway which you follow was trod by the most honored of the elect of God. Paul, who won provinces for Christ, nevertheless, had his messengers of Satan to buffet him, and had to stand against doubts and fears insinuated by the old serpent, even as you must stand. If you could have examined the celestial victors, one by one, as they entered within the pearly gates, you would have found them all covered with scars—though they now bear neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, they had, all of them, in the day of their flesh, to feel the cruel tooth and fang of that infernal serpent. Not one of them traversed a clear course and took his throne unchallenged—and neither will you conquer without conflict. For you, also, if there is no cross, there will be no crown. Therefore, be not astonished if you are attacked in all ways.

The glorified, in addition to having been attacked, were led to *resist* the evil one, for nobody overcomes an antagonist without fighting with him. There must be, in order for a real battle, two sides of the question. But I feel sure there are some professors who know much about being tempt-

ed, but they do not know much about resisting. Now, brethren, however great our temptation, our resistance must be greater. To be tempted is common, even to the worst and most reprobate of men—but to resist temptation is the mark of the child of God. The verse I quoted just now says—

"They wrestled hard, as we do now
With sins and doubts and fears."

It is not merely that they had "sins and doubts and fears," these all may have, but they "wrestled hard" with them. They would not be put down by them. They would not yield an inch—they stood upon their guard until they drove the sword of the Spirit through the very heart of the foe. "They resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Rest assured, dear friends, that sin will never be conquered without resistance. And if we fold our arms and suppose that we shall get the victory by believing that we have it, we shall be mightily mistaken. We must watch, and pray, and strive, and agonize, and press forward—"This kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting." Salvation is not by works, but conquest over sin involves fighting from day to day. Victory will not come to us while we lie passive. We must be stirred up with all the energy of the eternal Spirit to vanquish evil. These Canaanites must be driven out of the land by force of arms before we can take full possession of our inheritance. Let this, then, be our plea to our great Joshua as we gird on our harness and unsheathe our swords—

"Almighty King of saints,
These tyrant lusts subdue;
Drive the old dragon from his throne,
And all his hellish crew."

We find that these warriors all *overcame*, for heaven is not for those who merely fight, but for those who overcome. "He that overcomes shall inherit all things." "I fight against my sin," says one. Brother, do you overcome it? Did it seem a hard question just now when I said, do you resist? It is a harder question which I now put, "Do you overcome?" For if sin overcomes you—if as a habitual matter of fact sin is your master—then you have yet to know what true religion is. For of the saints, it is said, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace." There is a groaning and a crying which is common to the saints. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" is not an experience of an hour, never to be repeated—it runs, more or less, throughout the whole of life. But remember that it is also attended with hopeful confidence in the power of divine grace, for the apostle goes on to say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The believer feels the battle, but he also rejoices in the victory. He wrestles and conquers at the same time. I wish that some of our brethren could see how possible this is. We are victorious, though not without a conflict. Our victory is gained and we are more than conquerors, but still we march on to new conflicts and never lay aside our swords. The Christian's position is very much like that of Napoleon, who used to say, "Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me." And so with you, Christian—you have conquered through Jesus Christ, but you have to conquer, still, and go on as He did—

"conquering and to conquer." All this by the power of the Holy Spirit. What if today I have been enabled by grace to overcome some besetting sin? Before an hour is over I may find another sin stirring within my bosom and I must not yield to it—I am bound to conquer each temptation as it assails me. If I overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb, I am a Christian, but not else, for if any sin permanently overcomes me, I cannot enter heaven. If I overcome one sin by the power or the Holy Spirit, I must still be looking out to wrestle with others, for between here and heaven I may never accept a truce, or hope for a cessation of hostilities. Never may the Christian take off his harness, never say to himself, "The battle is fought and the victory is won, and I have nothing more to do." You are enlisted, brethren, in a lifelong fight. When you shall lie down in your grave, then may it be said, "The battle is over." But as long as you are here, you will be within gunshot of the enemy, and it is just possible your sharpest conflict will be upon your dying bed, even as John Knox, after conquering the devil in all ways and shapes, waged as he lay a-dying, the sternest struggle of his entire life. Even thus it may be with you, but you are bound to overcome. Attack, resistance, and victory must be yours.

So, then, in heaven they all *rejoice* because they have overcome, for the next verse to our text puts it, "Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell in them." It is a theme for gladness in heaven that they did fight and resist and overcome. Those white robes mean victories and so do those palms. But there could not have been victories if there had never been conflicts. There is joy among the angels, for they had their conflict when they stood firm against temptation and did not swerve when the dragon's tail swept away a third part of the stars of heaven. But ours will be a victory peculiarly sweet, a song especially melodious, because our battle has been peculiarly severe. We fell, we rose again, we were kept, upheld, sustained, and enabled to overcome at last, and therefore, we will rejoice forever before the throne of God.

I leave this point, but I would like you to make a personal application—Are you resisting? Are you conquering? Does the life of God in you get the upper hand of sin? Do not let us deceive ourselves. If sin is our master, we shall perish. Grace must reign in us or we are in a wretched condition. Do not let us look upon victory over sin as a luxury to be enjoyed by the higher life people—it is a condition into which we must all enter or we are not saved. Holiness is not a luxury for the few. It is a necessity for all saints. And what is preached as an accomplishment which may be obtained by a second conversion is, in truth, a necessary part of the first conversion, if it is of the Lord. The slaves of sin are not the children of God. If sin reigns in your mortal bodies, you are dead in it. If Satan has dominion over you, you are not in Christ Jesus, for, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Wherever grace lives, it either reigns or fights for the throne—it enters the soul on purpose to war with evil and overthrow it. Where the ark of the Lord is, Dagon must fall upon his face and be broken. "He that sins has not seen Him, neither known Him," says the apostle John, and he says truly. "That which is born of God overcomes the world," and if you let the world

get the mastery, you cannot be born of God. Thus, I leave the point, hoping that we may endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ and receive a crown of life at the last.

II. Now, secondly, THE VICTORS ALL FOUGHT WITH THE SAME WEAPONS. They had two weapons and these two were one—the blood and the Word. "They overcame him through the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony." First, *the blood of the Lamb*—it was theirs. The blood of the Lamb will not help us until it becomes our own. They went to Jesus by faith and received the atonement. The cleansing blood was sprinkled on them—it spoke peace in their consciences, it took away their sin—they were washed in it, they were made white as the driven snow. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." They were afar off, and "They were made near by the blood of Christ." This blood continued to give them access to God, for it gave them boldness to draw near unto the throne of grace. In fact, this blood was so theirs that it was the life of their spirit. It was a generous wine to them and became the highest joy of their souls. Brethren, if you and I are ever to be among these victors, the blood must be our own, appropriated by faith. How is it with you this morning? Has the blood cleansed you, my brother, my sister? Does the blood dwell in you as your life? Has the blood of the Lamb given you fellowship with God and brought you near? If so, you are on the way to overcoming by the blood.

The blood of the Lamb, according to the verse which precedes the text, had given them all they needed, for it gave them *salvation*. They were saved, completely saved. Jesus Christ, when they laid hold upon Him and felt the power of His blood, redeemed them from all iniquity and translated them from the kingdom of Satan. Then they received *strength*—note that word. They had been dead, but they obtained life. They had been weak, and they were made strong in the Lord, for he who knows the power of the blood of Jesus is made strong to do great exploits. Then they obtained the *kingdom*, for the kingdom comes to us by the way of the conquering blood of Jesus, and He has made us kings and priests unto God because He was slain. We are told, also, that they had *power*, or authority. Our Lord, who has risen from the dead, clothed all His disciples with authority when He said, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go you, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them." Beloved, if we have participated in the blood of Jesus Christ, I hope we feel it to be all these four things to us—salvation from sin, strength out of weakness, a kingdom in fellowship with Christ, and authority to speak in His name. It is the blood of the covenant and it secures all the covenant gifts of God to us. It is the life of our life, the all in all of all that we possess. So, then, they had the blood of the Lamb and they possessed the privileges which the blood brings with it.

But the gist of the text lies in the fact that they fought with the dragon by means of the blood of the Lamb and overcame with it. How did they do that? It is easy to discover. They overcame Satan's *terrors* with the blood of atonement. Satan is the great red dragon, a hideous seven-headed python, horrible to look upon, horned like the serpent called the Egyptian Cerastes. Man dreads the serpent race, but would dread more a monster

so dire as this, so full of poison, so red with fury. The conflict appears to be unequal enough between this horrid monstrosity and the seed of a timid woman. Yet when we are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, we are invulnerable and fear not the dragon, for we remember the promise which says, "You shall tread upon the lion and the adder." When the atonement brings peace to our hearts, the great dragon dwindles down to a mere snake with a broken head, of which it is written, "Upon your belly you shall go and dust shall you eat." We can see the heel mark of Christ upon his broken head and what is more, we expect to set our own heel there, for we are told that the Lord will bruise Satan under our feet shortly. I reckon upon the tune when the Lord will bruise him under my feet—it shall be as heavy a bruise as I can give him, I guarantee you. He has tempted and tried us all so much that the victory we shall gain will be one which will bring to Jesus much renown. And we will not fail to sing His praises as long as we have any being. Thus our fear of Satan ceases when we see that Christ has redeemed us from the curse and put Satan as an enemy under our feet. Our hearts exult in Your presence, O destroyer of the devil and his works, and we triumph in You—

"When we behold death, hell, and sin,
Vanquished by that dear blood of Yours,
And see the man that groaned and died
Sit glorious by His Father's side."

By the blood of the Lamb, we overcome Satan as the *accuser of the brethren*. The chapter expressly tells us that he accuses the brethren day and night. There is an instructive tradition among the Jews that Satan accuses the elect of God all day and all night long, except on the Day of Atonement, and then he is quiet. Glory be to the dying Lamb, the atonement shuts the mouth of the lion continually, for the atonement lasts all the year round. Neither in the court of heaven, nor in the court of conscience can the enemy's accusations harm us, for the blood of our Substitute is a bar to all suits against us. If we, by faith, are assured that Jesus has put away our sin, what cause have we for alarm? If the punishment due to our sin and the sin itself have both been carried away by our great Surety, so that sin is plunged into the depths of the sea and cast behind God's back, then who is he that shall harm us? Brethren, do but grasp the doctrine of the atonement, and know your own interest in it, and the accuser of the brethren will be silenced by the voice of the blood.

We overcome Satan by the same means as to his *craft*. He has seven heads, but we tell him Jesus died and that breaks all the seven heads and destroys the sevenfold ingenuity of his snares. He would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect, but the secret of the sprinkled blood is that which prevents the elect from ever being deluded by him. Who shall separate them from the love of Christ? Does not redemption by blood hold them fast to their Redeemer? You cannot be right anywhere if you are wrong upon the atonement, but if you are sound upon the substitutionary sacrifice, there is little fear of your falling into any serious error. As the needle once magnetized continues to seek the pole, so they who are once touched with the love of their dying Surety are sure to remember it and cannot long be turned in any other direction. As for the

dragon's horns of *power,* the power of the blood is far greater. Since we have been redeemed by Christ from under the power of Satan, he cannot regain his hold of us. His power is broken. As to the *crowns* which he wears, what do we care about them? We are delivered from under his power by being redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and Satan can never again have rule over us. As for the *energetic influence* which is figured by his tail, he may quench the very stars of heaven and pull down the most brilliant professors and make them fall to the earth as apostates—but he cannot harm us, because of the blood of Jesus we are protected by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Cling to the cross, dear brethren, for there you are out of the reach of the old serpent's venom. He may hiss, but he can do no more. No wave can ever wash a poor sinner off from the rock of ages. No storm can drive a penitent out of the clefts of the rock. Within the wounds of Jesus, we are secure from all the rage of Satan. In our battles with Satan, we need no other artillery but the atoning blood—it meets and conquers him at all points.

The other weapon is for use in spreading the gospel and defeating the devil in his power over our fellow men. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and *by the word of their testimony*. Now, brethren, what is the testimony of the saints? It is their testimony concerning the blood of the Lamb. If ever we are to conquer Satan in the world, we must preach the atoning blood. Whenever the doctrine of the atonement has been obscured in the church in any measure, to that extent the power of the church has declined. But you shall find that where there is a clear declaration of justification by faith in Jesus Christ, then the church comes forth in her glory and bruises the dragon's head. Dear brethren, if you want to deliver souls from the power of Satan, you must preach the sacrifice of Jesus and its power to remove sin. Does Satan cast the chains of drunkenness about men, or uncleanness, or self-righteousness? Preach the blood of Jesus as the only way of salvation. Let them see how sin was punished in Him and how ready the Lord is to forgive them and they will arise and go unto their Father. Tell the sinner that God is able to put away his sin because Jesus died, and touched with repentance, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, you will find the sinner break loose front dominion of the devil. If you find that same sinner trembling with despair, accused in his conscience, alarmed as at a great red dragon, you may cheer him by the old, old story of redeeming grace and dying love. The blood of Jesus is the end of despair. There is no weapon like a testimony to the cleansing blood with which to kill despondency. Tell the sinner that there is no sin that man has done but what the blood can put it away. Go to the very gates of hell with your testimony for remission by blood and you will find some welcome you upon the borders of destruction. Tell the thieves in prison and the criminals condemned to die—and the reprobates upon their deathbeds—that there is still life in a look at the Crucified One. And if you do this, you will deliver them from the hardness of heart which says, "There is no hope." If Satan deceives sinners with false hopes and causes them to trust in priestcraft and sacramentarianism, there is no way to overcome Satan in them but by the

blood of Jesus. I do believe, brothers, that if the atonement of Christ had been properly preached in the churches of England some years ago, we should not, now, be pestered with this revived popery. But there has been a great deal of mystification upon the doctrine of satisfaction for sin, a great deal of keeping back of the grand doctrine of vicarious sacrifice and therefore, as men need a Savior and a Sacrifice, if you do not present them the true one, they will go off to find a false one—and they do find such a false one in the priestcraft of the Roman and Anglican churches. Keep up the preaching of the one finished sacrifice and the dragon must fly. As St. Patrick is said to have driven out all the venomous creatures from Ireland, so let Jesus Christ come and all the serpent's seed will fly before Him—they cannot bear the great truth of the atoning death of the Son of God. Lift up the cross, young man, when you stand in the corners of the streets. Whatever you do not know, know the doctrine of the atonement. Whatever you cannot tell the people, tell them about Jesus Christ, who hung upon the tree for sinners. Make Him the main theme of all your conversation. If you write tracts, if you cannot explain the apocalypse, and few of us can, explain Calvary. Dwell much upon Golgotha and Gethsemane, "For I, if I am lifted up," says Christ, "will draw all men unto Me." Keep to the cross, this is the main attraction. This is the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. This is the central sun of the gospel and its light will scatter the darkness, but nothing else will do it. Israel never came out of Egypt until the blood of the Lamb was sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts of the houses—they overcame by the blood of the Lamb. The world of sinners redeemed will never be converted till we bring forth that grandest of all miracles, the Paschal Lamb and the blood by faith sprinkled on the door. Let us always proclaim salvation by the dying Lamb and shake the power of Satan to its foundations.

III. I must close with this last remark, that while they all fought with the same weapons THEY ALL FOUGHT WITH THE SAME SPIRIT, for the text says, "They loved not their lives unto the death." My brethren, what does this mean? I wish we could reach to it and interpret it by our lives.

The expression indicates *dauntless courage*. They were never afraid of the doctrine of a bleeding Savior, nor ashamed to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Let us never be ashamed of our hope. There is such a straining, in these days, after learned preaching. Such love of word-spinning and theory-inventing. But let us be fools for Christ's sake and stick to the old gospel, having no banner for our war but the bronze serpent, lifted high, even Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Let us never yield to sneers or ridicule. Some of us have been styled the echo of the Puritans—yes, the honorable title of, "*Ultimus Puritanorum*"—the last of the Puritans, has been assigned to us. It is well. We want no higher degree, for the old theology is very dear to us. We nail our colors to the mast. The atoning blood is the very life, soul, and core of our ministry, and shall be so as long as we live.

These men, in addition to dauntless courage, had *unswerving fidelity*. They "loved not their lives unto the death." They thought it better to die than to deny the faith. They could not be tempted, or led aside, by bribes

and offers of emoluments. And when life, itself was put into the scale, they did not hesitate—they stuck by the cross. Brethren, I want you all to do this, to have the courage to stick to your convictions about Christ and then, the fidelity to stand forth in evil times.

More than that, they were *perfect in their consecration.* "They loved not their lives unto the death." They gave themselves up, body, soul, and spirit, to the cause of which the precious blood is the symbol—and that consecration led them to perfect self-sacrifice. No Christian of the true type counts anything to be his own. He who really knows the power of the blood of Jesus says, "I am not my own. I am bought with a price." And to him, to live or die, to be poor or rich, to be sick or in health, to be in honor or in shame is not a matter of choice—he is his Master's own and has given himself up unreservedly, loving not his life even to the death. I think that this is the spirit in which to preach Christ's gospel. Brothers, we shall never see the gospel come to the front so as to conquer the dragon till we bring it there in this spirit. When God shall raise up among us men and women who live only to prove the power of the blood of Jesus Christ, and live for nothing else—who tell out the Savior's name and show, in their lives, what that blood has done for them, and are ready to die to glorify their Lord—then will come the times in which the song of victory shall be heard. Then shall the travailing woman have her reward. And then shall the dragon be covered with everlasting shame! May God bless you this morning by giving you to know the power of the blood for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Isaiah 51:9-16; Revelation 12.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
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BEWARE OF UNBELIEF
NO. 1238

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 6, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, you shall see it with your eyes, but shall not eat thereof."
2 Kings 7:2.

THE people of Samaria had cast off their allegiance to Jehovah and worshipped other gods, and therefore, according to His solemn threats, the Lord visited them with sore judgments. They were so blockaded by Syrian armies that food failed them altogether, and in their hunger, they devoured human flesh and the most abominable offal. They could not open the city gates, for they knew that the adversary, if he once entered, would sack and ransack the city, and put them all to the sword. Therefore, they remained cooped up within the city walls to perish. In their dire extremity, the Lord had mercy upon them and remembered that they were the children of Israel, the seed of Abraham, His friend, and therefore, He would not utterly destroy them, but gave them space for repentance. He turned an eye of pity upon the famished thousands and promised them relief from the sore famine which had wasted them. How rich in mercy is the Lord our God! Sin must be multiplied exceedingly before His long-suffering ceases. He is unwilling to execute the sentence of His wrath. Judgement is His strange work. He is always ready with His mercy. He waits to be gracious, yes, He is always beforehand with us in His grace, but He is very slow-footed in punishment. He pauses by the way and deliberates, and before He deals a blow He often expostulates with Himself and cries, "How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim?" Verily He is a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.

Perhaps one reason why the Lord was pleased in Samaria's extremity to visit it so graciously was the presence of Elisha there. Elisha was at least one man in the city who had power with God in prayer and perhaps a band of the sons of the prophets was with him, so that there were, in the apostate city, some few holy men, "faithful among the faithless found," and these acted as a handful of salt and preserved the city. Solomon tells us in the Proverbs that one wise man preserved a city and this was a case in which one *godly* man did so. The Lord had respect unto His servant, and for the sake of the man of God, Samaria was saved. Well was Elisha styled the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof, for he

was a better defense than 10,000 cavalry. We cannot measure the beneficial influence of godly men, they are universal benefactors. We hear men speak of the sweet influences of the Pleiades and the other stars, which smile from above upon this earth below, but we too much forget the influence of the stars below upon the heavens above. Power proceeds upward as well as downward, even as the angels ascended as well as descended upon the ladder which Jacob saw. A good man's prayers move the arm which moves the world.

The Lord met the need of Samaria by a most merciful promise, all the more full of grace because it bore upon its front the assurance of speedy fulfillment. The prophet was commissioned to declare, "Tomorrow, about this time, shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel." They had only 24 hours to wait. Just once more must the sun go down and rise and then there should be no more pinching hunger or cruel famine throughout Samaria. The timing of the supply was most kind—he gives twice who gives quickly—and so the speedy promise was doubly precious. The plentifulness of the promise made it the more gracious, for so cheap would the wheat and barley become, they should be sold at a figure far less than that which had been paid for doves' dung, whatever that may have been, and less than the price of such unwholesome meat as might be gathered from an ass's head, which had been sold for 40 pieces of silver.

The best food, even fine flour, was to be openly vended at a low rate at their very doors. They would not need to send to Egypt or fetch corn from afar, but it was to be brought to their gates and sold at a price which would enable all to purchase. It was very great goodness on the Lord's part to meet the famine-stricken multitude with such a right royal word of cheer. But observe how God's prophet is answered—not as one would have thought—with words of thanksgiving and tears of gratitude, but with the reverse. They did not fall down on their knees and exclaim, "O God, how good You are." They did not lift up a single word of praise, as surely they should have done. The only response was a prideful sneering, contemptuous, unbelieving utterance—"If the Lord should make windows in heaven might such a thing be?" O base ingratitude! Ungenerous return for such great mercy!

Mark well the Lord's answer to the unbeliever's scorn. There is nothing which He will so little endure as unbelief, and unbelief, in the face of unusual mercy, becomes doubly provoking. In the name of the Lord, the prophet at once responded—"Behold, you shall see it with your eyes, but you shall not eat thereof." The Lord has a speedy answer to the unbelief which dares defy Him. If men call God liar, they shall, before long, have sufficient proof in their own persons that His threatenings do not lie.

We shall try, this morning, to gather from the text the lesson which it was intended to teach us. May God bless us in so doing, helping us by His Holy Spirit.

First, let us observe *the conduct of unbelief.* Secondly, *the divine answer to it.* And thirdly, *the appointed punishment of it.*

I. First let us notice repentantly, for we have been guilty of this sin ourselves, THE CONDUCT OF UNBELIEF. You will observe that *unbelief dares to question the truthfulness of the promise itself*. The prophet had said, "Tomorrow, about this time, shall two measures of barley be sold for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel." And directly, in the teeth of this, "Thus says Jehovah," comes the contemptuous denial of the lord on whose hand the king leaned. Unbelief does not hesitate to say that what God declares will not be fulfilled, although it frequently veils its speech, and usually imagines some sort of argument upon which to base its denials. Sophistry comes to the aid of incredulity and endeavors to buttress its bowing walls. If you had asked the sneering nobleman why he spoke so mistrustingly, he would have replied, "Why, the promise is far too great to be fulfilled. It is out of all character and reason. How can there be flour enough in this city, in 24 hours, to be sold at a measure for a shekel? Why, you could not get a measure of fine four for 10,000 shekels. It cannot be had for love or money, and there is not a measure of barley left in all the country around Samaria, for the Syrians have plundered every homestead and granary. Do you not see that the thing this prophet talks about is utterly impossible? His talk is preposterous. We might have believed him if his prediction had been a tenth as large, but he has overdone it. No attention ought to be paid to his ramblings." Has not your unbelief, my brethren, sometimes made out a case for mistrust from the greatness of the promised good? When first the Lord was drawing you with cords of love, was not the very greatness of His mercy one of the severest trials of your faith? When you found that He would blot out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities, did not your heart say, "How can it be?" Well do I remember with what power and sweetness the words of Isaiah once came to my soul to remove this doubt—"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." We forget this glorious declaration and we fall to measuring God's capability of blessing by our capacity of believing. And because the favor is wonderful we think it improbable. Is not this ill reasoning? Can anything be great with God? Can any marvel be too miraculous for the Lord? The matter is hard in itself, but is it hard for omnipotence? It is a massive blessing, but can it be too large for the infinitely gracious hand to bestow? Surely the Holy One of Israel is not such a one as yourself—why, then, do you limit Him as if He could give no more than you can give? May divine love deliver our souls from this net of unbelief which so easily entangles us. Low thoughts of the divine power greatly dishonor God and deprive us of much comfort. Is He not a great God and is it not like Him to do great things for His people? His resources are infinite, and therefore, He is able to verify His promises, however great they may be. He did not promise in ignorance or in haste. His word is not a thing of yesterday, therefore, He will not fail to keep His promise to the letter.

Perhaps had you inquired of this lord he would have said to you, "Oh, but it will be such *a new thing*. I have lived in Samaria and I have not seen flour exposed for sale at any price for months. The householders have hoarded it up as if each ounce of it were a jewel. Each man has taken care to secure what he had for his own family, and now there is none left anywhere, even in private stores. And yet you talk of selling wheat and barley at the gate of Samaria. Blessed would the eyes be which should see such a thing for many a day! I never expect to see it, and a thousand prophets could not induce me to indulge such a dream. We shall perish by famine or by the sword of the Syrians, for this promise will not be kept." My brethren, has not our unbelief sometimes fed upon the novelty of the promised blessing? It seemed a new thing to you sinners that the Lord should, in a moment, pass by your sins and make you righteous in the righteousness of Christ—yet the new thing has come to pass. When we hear of a more than ordinarily successful Christian work, many brethren who have not been favored with such prosperity cannot believe it to be true. Had they seen two or three people converted and added to the church in a year, they would have said, "This is the finger of God." But if they hear of 40 or a hundred, or even a thousand converted during a gracious revival, they are very skeptical. The conversion of thousands under one sermon, they admit, may have taken place in Old Testament times, but that is a long time ago—we cannot expect to see such things now. Thus, they reason in their hearts and insinuate that the Lord's arm has waxed short. Oh, brethren, if God has given us a promise which has not yet been fulfilled, and if there never has before occurred anything like it, this is no excuse for our disbelieving the divine Word. Has He not promised, "Behold I will do a new thing"? (Isa. 43:19). Did He not say to His people Israel, "I have showed you new things from this time, even hidden things, and you did not know them." Is not everything new when, for the first time, the Lord reveals it? Moses might have doubted God's promise to smite Egypt with plagues, for these plagues were novelties. He might have doubted the Lord's power to lead His people through the Red Sea, for when had a sea been divided for a nation to pass through it dry shod? He might have doubted God's power to feed the hosts in the wilderness, for when had bread been rained down from heaven, and when had water leaped from a rock? The Lord, who works great wonders, shows us mercies "new every morning." He is not tied down to a monotony of procedure. His blessings are as varied as His creations. He delights to surprise us with fresh manifestations of love and thus it is clear that the novelty of the blessing is no excuse, whatever, for our unbelief.

I dare say the scoffing nobleman would have said, "It is the *suddenness* of the thing which renders the promise so incredible. Tomorrow! What? Abundance of food tomorrow! No, that is too much. Say that in three months we may be supplied and we may believe it, but tomorrow is going too far. How could wheat and barley be brought in such plenty to Samaria in the time, even upon swift horses and dromedaries? "Suppose

the Syrians were to leave us tomorrow, yet the country has been devoured by them, and you must import wheat from some distant land. It is not at all likely that this could be done on a sudden. Do not strain our faith too much, give us a month or two, at any rate." My brethren, nowadays, I find that this point of suddenness often staggers unbelieving minds. "What? The church revived all of a sudden! How can it be? True doctrines may, perhaps, be spread in England by slow degrees, after generations have come and gone, but to expect the gospel to spread through the country in a few months is perfectly absurd." Some, perhaps, among my present hearers, dare not hope that this south of London can be immediately stirred, as I believe it will be. And they dare not expect conversions at once, such as I venture to look for. Some dread everything sudden and feel sure that if any gracious gift comes suddenly, it will prove to be like Jonah's gourd which came up in a night and perished in a night. They give the world express trains and condemn grace to travel in the baggage car. Why do they dream that the Lord is slow? Why do they limit the rapidity of His actions? He created the world in six days, could He not recreate it in the same time? He destroyed the race in the days of Noah in 40 days—can He not do His saving work with equal speed? Is it not written, "He rode upon a cherub and did fly; yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind"? O unbelief, how dare you say, "In a year," when God says, "Tomorrow." If He says, "Tomorrow," it will be tomorrow to the tick of the clock. "Tomorrow, about this time," said the prophet, and so it was. Let us not be as those spoken of by the prophet Haggai, who said, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." Let us lay aside this postponing of expectancy and believe that God can do wonders today, even today. Ah, sinner, you cannot believe that God can save you in a minute, but He can. In less time than it takes the clock to tick, He can cause you to pass from death to life, and He can cast all your transgressions behind His back. At this very moment, if you will look to Jesus Christ, the work of grace shall be accomplished. The publican, who confessed his sin, had not to tarry long for his justification, but received it before he went down to his house.

This quibbling fellow would also have justified his unbelief by saying, "Where can you find *the means* for accomplishing this promise? So much corn and barley are to be sold, you say, but where is it to come from? There are no corn factories here, and if there were, their stocks would have run out long ago. No great underground storerooms remain to be discovered, I am sure of that, for I have ordered a minute search in every place where food could be hidden away. No," he would have said, "there will be no cheap food, for there are no means by which it can be had." Has not our unbelief too often run on that tack? We, too often, want to see *how* the Lord will perform His Word. We begin calculating, like the disciples, that 200 pennyworth of bread will not be enough for the multitude, and as for a few loaves and fishes, we cannot believe that they will be of any avail among so many. Of course, if we have to engineer according to the laws of mechanics, we must calculate our forces and demand

means proportionate to the results to be produced. But why apply the slender line of mechanics to the omnipotent God? No, I think we do worse, for we hardly carry out our calculations correctly in reference to the Lord's working. If we did, we should calculate that, given omnipotence, difficulties no longer exist, and impossibilities have disappeared. If the Lord is, indeed, almighty, then how dare we question as to ways and means? Ways and means are His business and none of ours, and with Him no such question can ever arise.

I should not wonder, too, if the nobleman's unbelief arose partly from *the realization* of the scene which would be presented if the promise were, indeed, fulfilled. Had he been told that there would be a great deliverance worked for Jerusalem when it was besieged, I dare say he would have believed it—but for Samaria! What? Here? Here, on this spot? In these streets which have so long heard the wailing of weeping women and the groans of famished men! Plenty of corn and barley in 24 hours! He could not believe that. It is easy to believe that God will keep His promise in Australia. It is not always so easy to believe that He will do it here. That the Lord will be very gracious to my afflicted brother over there, I do firmly believe, but do I always believe that He will be gracious to me? You have been in many troubles and you have been helped through them, and you believe that God would help you a second time through those same troubles if they were to return. But this particular one that you are now in—there is something so peculiar about it that you cannot quite realize that you will be supported under it. We have generally got a large quantity of faith when we do not need it. But when faith comes to be needed, how much of it evaporates. The time to believe in the promise of God is when the famine is sore in the city. But, alas for the nobleman, he could not realize the blessing. He could not suppose it to be possible.

But now, putting the whole of these causes for distrust together, is there any force in any or all of them as a reason for doubting God? If God has said it, He will certainly do it. Why, then, do we doubt Him?

Now observe, secondly, that *unbelief often shows itself by shutting up the Lord to one mode of action*. This man thinks that, perhaps, there might be food in Samaria if God would make windows in heaven, or, as some read it, open sluices in heaven out of which you would see the barley and flour pouring down. That would be the only way, as far as he can see, by which God could feed the people. Perhaps he remembered the manna in the wilderness and how it seemed to drop from the clouds of heaven. Well, God might do it in that way. He goes the length of half admitting that perhaps He might do it in that way. That is how unbelief does—we say, "Yes, God may deliver me in my time of trouble, if such-and-such a friend's heart is touched." God is shut up to touching that friend's heart, according to our notion. The sinner thinks that he might be saved, if he could get to hear Mr. So-and-so, or if such-and-such an impression could be felt within, but according to his notion, the Lord is shut up to converting him under one minister and bringing him to Jesus in one particular way. That is many a man's notion of revival—"If you

could get Mr. Eloquent to come and hold a course of services in our town, he would wake us up, but I do not see any other way." Do you not call that unbelief? God calls it so. Why, brethren, if the Lord wished to feed Samaria, He could have done it by multiplying the food that was there, just as He multiplied the widow's oil. Or He could have continued the quantity of food undiminished, just as He did the barley cake and the little oil of the widow of Zarephath. God has a thousand ways of accomplishing His purposes. He might have turned every stone in Samaria into a loaf of bread and made the dust of its streets into flour, if He so willed. If He sent food in the wilderness without harvests and water in the wilderness without wind and without rain, He can do as He wills and perform His own work in His own way. Do not let us think of limiting the Holy One of Israel to any special mode of action. When we hear of men being led to break out into new ways of going to work, do not let us feel, "This must be wrong." Instead, let us hope that it is very probably right, for we need to escape from these horrid ruts and wretched conventionalisms, which are hindrances rather than helps. Some very stereotyped brethren judge it to be a crime for an evangelist to sing the gospel—and as to that American organ—dreadful! One of these days, another set of conservative souls will hardly endure a service without such things, for the horror of one age is the idol of the next. Every man in his own order and God using them all—and if there happens to be some peculiarity, some idiosyncrasy, so much the better. God does not make His servants by the score as men run iron into molds—He has a separate work for each man—and let each man do his own work in his own way, and may God bless him.

Once again, notice that *unbelief does not, after all, believe that even if God were to work in her way the thing would have been done*. Did you notice a little note of interrogation in the text, "Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" Now, look through your spectacles and you will see at the end of the word, "be," a note of question. He meant to say that if God did make windows in heaven, even then He could not feed the starving multitudes in Samaria. If the men who say, "If God were to do so-and-so, we might see a great blessing," were pressed home, it would be discovered that they do not believe that it would be done even then. Unbelief is such a presumptuous denier of the truthfulness of God that it does not give Him credit for being able to keep His promise in any shape or form, no, not even by the most extraordinary deeds. May the Spirit of God drive such unbelief as this out of our hearts. It may be there at this very moment, and we may be unconscious of it. Let us search and look and drive this traitor out, for if anything can harm ourselves and the church and the world, it is disbelief in the fidelity of God.

II. Now let us pass on to the second head, THE DIVINE ANSWER. Here stands God's servant, Elisha, who has spoken in God's name. And there stands the great nobleman who, I have no doubt, very much despises the poor prophet, and he answers Elisha with a sarcasm, thought

to be witty, I dare say. Many laughed at it and thought it quite extinguished the good man. But notice the conduct of the Lord's servant. He does not argue with the man, not at all. We have had a great deal too much of arguing with unbelievers. Whenever a rotten book comes out, some ministers take care to read it all through and then they go and tell their people all about it under the pretence of answering it, and the people forget the answers, and only remember the poison which the ministers unwisely disseminate. There would not be a tenth part of the infidelity that there is now, if ministers would let it alone. It is like a pool of filth and it is all the worse for being stirred. Let it alone. It has not enough vitality to live of itself—it is only our opposition that makes it vital at all. So Elisha had no argument for him, nor need we be very careful to answer those who deny the truth of God. They shall answer for it to their God, not to us.

And there was no adoption of the unbeliever's means. God did not say by His servant Elisha, "Well, to oblige you, I will go out of my way and make windows in heaven, if you think it the best way of provisioning the city." Not at all. When there are objections taken to modes of usefulness which God evidently blesses, it is not for us to alter them because the popular voice is against them, or some very wise people have condemned them. I think that is the very reason for going on with them. And when the world suggests that holy work ought to be done in this way or in that, the very best thing is to let those who like the proposed plans try them themselves. God does not shape His course to please the wisdom of men. If the Lord means to save souls in this part of London, He will do it in His own way, and unbelief may say what she likes, He will not abate one jot or tittle of His own purpose, but bless the people as seems good in His sight.

In due time, the promise was kept. That lord's unbelief did not alter the mind of God. The promise was kept—the wheat and the barley were sold at the prices named. His lordship's indignation and sarcasm did not postpone the fall of prices for a single hour. Lord or no lord, nobleman or no nobleman, it made no difference whatever—the flour and the barley were there. And herein is our great joy, that although there has been much infidelity in our country, much loose talk about the doctrines of the gospel, much insinuation that the whole thing is worn out and out of date, God will not, because of these semi-infidels, withhold the blessing from His own true people who really believe His Word. Our God will answer the infidelity of this age, no, has answered it during the last two or three years. There has come news to us, brought by those who were despised, that there is corn for the people. Some who were not ordained messengers, but laymen outside the city, have made a discovery—we did not imagine that they should do it—but they have brought information that there is plenty of food to be had by the starving crowds and now the gospel is preached to the multitudes and they are told that Jesus Christ is able to save, that He is ready to give them salvation. What follows? Why, we have seen it already, we have seen it in the Tabernacle for many

years, and we shall see it generally all over England, I hope, soon. The people go rushing out to find this bread, and as they pour forth in armies, they tread infidelity under their feet. There it stands, this boasted modern thought, this vaunted culture—it looks upon the preachers of the simple gospel and those who go to hear them as a set of fools. Infidelity will not believe that the gospel of Jesus is the bread of the soul—the crowding of the people is the answer. See how eagerly they devour the Word! See how they rejoice in it! Listen to their songs like the voice of many waters! Unbelief is trodden down as mire in the streets. Brethren, if you want to answer infidelity, preach the gospel. Tell the people that Jesus Christ is able to save sinners. Lift high the bloodstained cross. Proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prisons to them that are bound. This will make a stir, this will agitate the masses. There is nothing like it. Christ's gospel is like fire flung among the standing corn—it makes a wondrous conflagration. Preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified and the people will come to hear it—they are not masters of themselves, they cannot stay away—and as they hear it, and as they feed upon it, and joy comes unto them, and peace, and new life, *facts will answer theories,* salvation will be the best reply to the witticisms and the sophistries of unbelief. Do not enter into arguments, but test the gospel practically. Somebody says that yonder lifeboat is not of the right color. I see a number of men in the rigging of yonder sinking vessel—they cannot hold on much longer. Here, good fellows, do not stand debating about the boat, jump into it, pull out to the vessel, get the men on board and bring them to shore. Hurrah! Here they are! Is not that the best reply to every objection? There they are! If they tell us that the gospel which we preach is not true, we point to many here present whose stories of reclamation from vice and deliverance from despair and uplifting into light and life and holiness are proofs that the gospel is divine. There they are! Facts, facts, facts, these are God's replies. The noble lord was silenced in death by the facts of the case.

III. Thirdly, our text teaches us THE APPOINTED PUNISHMENT OF UNBELIEF. It is allotted to unbelief that it shall see with its eyes what it cannot enjoy. This is always fulfilled, although in different ways. The unbeliever says he will not believe what he cannot see—God's answer is that *he shall not enjoy what he does see*. There was the flour, there was the barley. The man could see these, but he could not enjoy them. Unbelievers do not really enjoy the things of this life. The mass of them find that wealth does not yield them satisfaction—their outward riches cannot conceal their inner poverty. To many men it is given to have all that their heart can wish and yet not to have what their heart does wish. They have everything except contentment. If you will not accept, in faith, the spiritual gifts which God promises, then the temporal gifts which the world promises shall tantalize you. You shall eat and not be satisfied. You shall have, but not have enough. You shall spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfies not. If you will not have

things unseen, things seen shall become a mere shadow to you. This is one punishment of unbelief.

Another is this—oftentimes men, in connection with spiritual things, being unbelievers, have their *minds convinced but their hearts are not converted*. They see enough of the work of God to make them know that the Lord, He is God, and that Christ is the Savior, that faith brings pardon, that the Holy Spirit renews the heart. They know all these things and yet they never taste of them. They are as orthodox as orthodox can be as to their creed, but there is nothing in their heart. The living water flows by their lips, but as they stoop to drink, it flees away as in the fable of Tantalus of old.

Often, also, *they see God's work in others but never feel it in themselves*. Their wife has found peace, but they have not. Their dear child has been converted, but they are not. The brother has seen his sister rejoicing in the Lord, but he knows no such joy. The sister has seen her sister lay hold of Christ, but she has never done so herself. This makes missing the blessing so much the more unhappy a circumstance, for to be starving when everybody else is fed is dreadful. I would not have been in that nobleman's place for all the world, to see the people all satisfied and himself not able to partake, and yet it is so with some of you.

Do you know that this will lead to *an eternal tantalization*? For unbelievers in hell, according to Christ's own description, will look up and see Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, but they, themselves, will be cast out. Surely it must be one of the hells of hell—to see heaven and to have a great gulf fixed between you and it.

You shall have good things if you believe your God, but if you will not believe in Him you shall never receive them. The punishment is natural, and fair, and appropriate. If certain persons believe that gold is to be found in a mine and others do not, is it not right that, if there is gold there, those who believed in it and sought after it should have it? Should he who ridiculed the idea come in for his share, too? Nobody would think so. It is the very least thing that can be expected of us to believe God, for He cannot lie. And if we refuse credence to the Word of God, it cannot be thought to be a hard measure that the blessing should not be given to us. If you will not believe, you shall not be established. O unbeliever, it will be your lot to know that God speaks the truth, but never to know that truth in your own soul. You will know that He is gracious, know that He is ready to forgive, know that He lifts sinners up to His own throne through the blood of the Lamb—and yet you will never be forgiven, never be saved, never be glorified. I am afraid there are some in this house of prayer who are going hard on towards such a doom. I do not mean strangers who have dropped in here once, but I mean those who have sat here many years and yet have never believed. In this next month, you will see God's grace working in the south of London, but it will not come near you—you are an unbeliever, and you have been so for many years. There is no reason to expect you will ever be altered. The probabilities are you will remain just as you are. The rain will fall around you, but never

upon you. The barn floor will be wet, but your fleece will be dry. May God grant it be not so, but it is to be feared it will.

Now, in closing, I want to apply my subject to the special circumstances under which we are found today, at the commencement of the special services for the south of London. Dear friends, I do earnestly trust that all of you who live in this region, who love the Lord, will unite your best energies to make this movement a success. I mean chiefly by prayer for the blessing, by giving your attendance at such meetings as are called for Christian conferences, by endeavoring to take your friends, your children, and your neighbors, if they are unconverted, to the place. And by doing everything you can to win souls, as the Holy Spirit shall enable you. It may be just possible that some of you are standing aloof. Now, I cannot condemn any brother for doing that if his reasons are such as satisfy his conscience, for there is no movement, however excellent, but what, from some point or other, is open to criticism. And if a brother's criticism is conscientious and honest, it is not for me to judge him for a moment. But I should like to put this question to some—Do you not think that at the bottom of almost all objections raised against this work there is unbelief? It is an unusual thing and there is excitement—why not? Somebody says he does not see any remarkable talent in the two brethren [see next sermon, #1239]—what of that? I am sure the brethren do not pretend to have any talent whatever, for more unassuming men I never saw in my life, and that is one reason why God blesses them so much. For one reason and another, good people hold off, but does it not all amount to unbelief? Our friends in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Newcastle bear indisputable testimony to the fact that souls were saved in large numbers, that the churches were edified, and the tone of religious feeling improved. We cannot doubt the testimony of faithful, well-instructed brethren. And I think if we hold back, it will resolve itself into this that we do not believe in God's working just now upon a large scale by simple instrumentality. For my part, I would like to put it to myself thus—Could I justify myself in standing back when I come to my dying bed? Here are two men who have, for months, consecrated themselves to the preaching of the gospel with no object in the world but the winning of souls for Christ. Baser calumny than to assert that they have a selfish motive never fell from the lip of Satan himself. They have no design nor object to gain, but the sole glory of God. They seek conversions, conversions to Christ, only. And brethren, if there were a thousand faults in them, who am I, or who are you to judge them and to say we will not help them in such a work and with such motives? Brother, do you desire God's glory? So do I. Do you desire the salvation of souls? So do I. Brother, do you preach salvation by the precious blood? So do I. Brother, do you believe in regeneration by the power of the Holy Spirit? So do I. Do you tell sinners to believe and live? That is exactly what I am telling them, and if we are agreed in this, for my part I cannot conceive any excuse for any man's holding back unless he has so much work of his own to do that he has no time to spare, in which case let him at least bid them God speed.

If we do not help now, we may live to regret it. For some reason or other, the crowds are willing to hear the gospel, and there seems to be a unity among Christians about the thing. However it comes about, let us accept it from God, and use it. There is a tide which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune as well in heavenly things as in secular, and let us take this tide, however God may have sent it to us, and use it to our best. For if not, if unbelief holds us back, it may happen to us even as to Moses, who, for his unbelief, never entered into the promised land—he saw it, but never entered it. And we may see, and see with gladness, God blessing the church, but we may have no part of the blessing in our own church. Do we wish to see the clusters of grapes that come from an Eshcol into which we cannot enter?

It may even happen to us as it happened to this nobleman that God may see fit to take us out of the way. I have marked it—do not think me superstitious—when any truly good man has stood in God's way, God has made very short work with him. He has taken him home, or He has laid him aside by sickness. If you will not help and will hinder, you will be put aside, and perhaps, your own usefulness will be cut short. Or it may happen, worst of all, that if we refuse help, when the time of blessing has come, we shall remain among our fellow Christians, but for many years we shall be wretched and unprofitable. A blessing was coming and you did not seem to want it, so the Lord sent it somewhere else and you will be a doubting, miserable, carping, critical, faultfinding Christian as long as you live—never eating the dainties, but always pointing out errors in the cookery—never delighting in the joy of your Lord nor making your harps to ring for joy over converts, but always playing the part of the elder brother who was angry and would not go in, though it was his own brother that had come home and his own father who had killed the fatted calf.

God save us from this, and cause us, from this very day, to shake off unbelief and to go forward rejoicing in the Lord!

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Kings 7.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—191, 46 (VERSE 2), 483; AND MR. SANKEY'S, "RING THE BELLS OF HEAVEN."

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MESSRS. MOODY AND SANKEY DEFENDED—OR A VINDICATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH
NO. 1239

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

"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."
Galatians 5:24.

FROM several quarters, we have heard intensely earnest objections, lately, to *the matter and tenor* of the preaching of the evangelists from America who have been working among us. Of course, their teaching, as well as our own, is open to honest judgment and they, we feel sure, would rather court than shun investigation of the most searching sort. Criticisms upon their style of speaking and singing, and so on, are so unimportant that nobody has any need to answer them. "Wisdom is justified of her children." It is a waste of time to discuss mere matters of taste, for no men, however excellent, can please all, or even become equally adapted to all constitutions and conditions. Therefore, we may let such remarks pass without further observation. But upon the matter of doctrine very much has been said and said, also, with a good deal of temper not always of the best kind. What has been affirmed by a certain class of public writers comes to this, if you boil it down—that it cannot really do any good to tell men that simply by believing in Jesus Christ they will be saved. And that it may do people very serious injury if we lead them to imagine that they have undergone a process called conversion and are now safe for life. We are told by these gentlemen, who ought to know, for they speak very positively, that the doctrine of immediate salvation through faith in Christ Jesus is a very dangerous one. They say that it will certainly lead to the deterioration of the public morality since men will not be likely to set store by the practical virtues when faith is lifted up to so very lofty a position. If it were so, it were a grievous fault, and woe to those who lead men into it. That it is not the fact, we are sure, but meanwhile let us survey the field of battle.

Will you please notice that this is no quarrel between these gentlemen and our friends Messrs. Moody and Sankey alone. It is a quarrel between these objectors and the whole of us who preach the gospel. For differing, as we do in the style of preaching it, we are all ready to set our seal to the clearest possible statement that men are saved by faith in Jesus Christ and saved the moment they believe. We all hold and teach that there is such a thing as conversion—and that when men are converted,

they become other men than they were before—and a new life begins which will culminate in eternal glory. We are not so dastardly as to allow our friends to stand alone in the front of the battle, to be looked upon as peculiar persons holding strange notions from which the rest of us dissent. So far as salvation through faith in the atoning blood is concerned, they preach nothing but what we have preached all our lives. They preach nothing but what has the general consent of Protestant Christendom. Let that be known to all and let the archers shoot at us all alike.

Then, further, if this is the point of objection, we should like those who raise it to know that they do not raise it against us merely, and these friends who are more prominent, but against the Protestant faith which these very same gentlemen most probably profess to glory in. The Protestant faith, in a nutshell, lies in this very same justification by faith which they hoot at. It was the discovery that men are saved by faith in Jesus Christ which first stirred up Luther. That was the ray of light which fell upon his dark heart, and by the power of which he came into the liberty of the gospel. This is the hammer by which popery was broken in old times and this is the sword with which it still is to be smitten—the very "Sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Jesus is the all-sufficient Savior and, "He that believes in Him is not condemned." Luther used, in fact, to say—and we endorse it—that this matter of justification by faith is the article by which a church must stand or fall. That so-called church which does not hold this doctrine is not a church of Christ. And it is a church of Christ that does hold it, notwithstanding many mistakes into which it may have fallen. The contest lies really between the Popish doctrine of merit and the Protestant doctrine of grace. And no man who calls himself a Protestant can logically dispute the question with us and our friends.

We shall go somewhat further than this. The objection is not against Messrs. Moody and Sankey, but against all evangelical ministers. It is not against them only, but against our common Protestantism. And yet more—it is against the inspired Word of God—for if this book teaches anything under heaven, it certainly teaches that men are saved by faith in our Lord Jesus. Read the epistle to the Galatians, and your judgment may be very perverse, but you cannot, by any common wresting of words, expel the doctrine of justification by faith from the epistle. It was written on purpose to state that truth plainly and defend it fully. Neither can you get rid of that doctrine from the whole New Testament. You shall find it not merely seasoning all the epistles, but positively saturating them. And as you take chapter by chapter, you may wring out of them, as out of Gideon's fleece, this one truth—that justification before God is by faith—not by the works of the law. So the objection is against the Bible—and let those who shoot their arrows understand that they fight against the Eternal Spirit of God and the witness which He has borne by His prophets and apostles. Deny inspiration, and you have no ground to stand on. But while you believe the Bible, you must believe in justification by faith.

But now let us look this matter in the face. Is it true or not that persons who believe in Jesus Christ become worse than they were before? We are not backward to answer the inquiry and we stand in a point of observation which supplies us with abundant data to go upon. We solemnly affirm that men who believe in Jesus become purer, holier, and better. At the same time, I confess that there has been a good deal of injudicious and misleading talk, at times, by uninstructed advocates of free grace. I fear, moreover, that many people think that they believe in Jesus Christ, but do nothing of the sort. We do not defend rash statements, or deny the existence of weak-minded followers, but we ask to be heard and considered. Some persons say, "You tell these people that they will be saved upon their believing in Christ." Exactly so. "But will you kindly tell me what you mean by being saved, sir?" I will, with great pleasure. We do not mean that these people will go to heaven when they die, irrespective of character. But, when we say that if they believe in Jesus, they will be saved, we mean that they will be saved from living as they used to live—saved from being what they now are—saved from licentiousness, dishonesty, drunkenness, selfishness, and any other sin they may have lived in. The thing can readily be put to the test. If it can be shown that those who have believed in the Lord Jesus have been saved from living in sin, no rational man ought to entertain any objection to the preaching of such a salvation. Salvation from wrongdoing is the very thing which every moralist should commend and not censure—and that is the salvation which we preach. I am afraid that some imagine that they have only to believe something or other, and they will go to heaven when they die, and that they have only to feel a certain singular emotion and it is all right with them. Now, if any of you have fallen into that error, may God, in His mercy, lead you out of it, for it is not *every* faith that saves, but only *the* faith of God's elect. It is not *any* sort of emotion that changes the heart, but the work of the Holy Spirit. It is a small matter to go into an inquiry-room and say, "I believe." Such an avowal as that proves nothing at all. It may even be false. It will be proved by this—if you have rightly believed in Jesus Christ you will become, from that time forward, a different man from what you were. There will be a change in your heart and soul, in your conduct and your conversation. And seeing you thus changed, those who have been honest objectors will right speedily leave off their objections, for they will be in the condition of those who saw the man that was healed standing with Peter and John, and therefore, they could say nothing against them. The world demands facts and these we must supply. It is of no use to cry up our medicine by words—we must point to cures. Your change of life will be the grandest argument for the gospel, if that life shall show the meaning of my text—"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

Let us discuss this text in an apologetic manner, hoping to overcome prejudice, if God permits.

I. Notice, first of all, that THE RECEPTION OF JESUS CHRIST BY FAITH IS, IN ITSELF, AN AVOWAL THAT WE HAVE CRUCIFIED THE

FLESH WITH THE AFFECTIONS AND LUSTS. If faith is such an avowal, why say that it is not connected with holy living?

Let me show that this is the case. Faith is the accepting of Jesus Christ. In what respects? Well, principally as a substitute. He is the Son of God and I am a guilty sinner. I deserve to die—the Son of God stands in my place and suffers for me. And when I believe in Him, I accept Him as standing for me. To believe in Jesus was very beautifully set forth in the old ceremony of the law, when the person bringing a sacrifice laid his hands upon the head of the bullock or the lamb and thereby accepted the victim as standing in his place, so that the victim's sufferings should be instead of his sufferings. Now, our faith accepts Jesus Christ as standing in our place. The very pith and marrow of faith's confidence lies in this—

"He bore, that I might never bear,
His Father's righteous ire."

Christ for me, Christ in my place.

Now, try to catch the following thought. When you believe, you accept Christ as standing instead of you and profess that what He did, He did for you—and what did Christ do upon the tree? He was crucified and died. Follow the thought and note well that by faith *you regard yourself as dead with Him*—crucified with Him. You have not really grasped what faith means unless you have grasped this. With Him you suffered the wrath of God, for He suffered in your place. You are now in Him—crucified with Him, dead with Him, buried with Him, risen with Him and gone into glory with Him—because He represents you and your faith has accepted the representation. Do you see, then, that you did, in the moment when you believed in Christ, register a declaration that you were, from that moment on, dead unto sin? Who shall say that our gospel teaches men to live in sin, when the faith which is essential to salvation involves an avowal of death to it? The convert begins with agreeing to be regarded as dead with Christ to sin—have we not here the foundation stone of holiness?

Observe, also, that if he follows the commands of Christ, the very first step which a Christian takes, after he has accepted the position taken up by the Lord Jesus on his behalf, is another avowal more public than the first, namely, *his baptism*.

By faith he has accepted Christ as dead, instead of him, and he regards himself as having died in Christ. Now, every dead man ought to be buried, sooner or later. And so, when we come forward and confess Christ, we are "buried with Him in baptism unto death, that like as Jesus Christ rose from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also might rise to newness of life." Though baptism does not mean anything as a ceremony, having no power or efficacy in and of itself, yet as a sign and symbol it teaches us that true believers are dead and buried with Christ. So, you see, the two ways in which, according to the gospel, we actually and avowedly give ourselves to Christ, are by faith and Baptism. "He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved." Now, the essence of faith is to accept Christ as representing me in His death. And the essence

of baptism is to be buried with Christ because I am dead with Him. Thus, at the very doorstep of the Christian religion, in its first inward act and its first outward symbol, you get the thought that believers are, from now on, to be separated from sin and purified in life. He who truly believes and knows what it is to be really buried with Christ, has begun—no, he has, in a certain sense, effected completely—what the text describes as the crucifixion of the flesh with the affections and lusts. For, dear friends, let it never be forgotten that the grand object for which we lay hold on Christ is the death of sin. Who among us has believed in Christ that he might escape the pangs of hell? O, brethren, you have but a very poor idea of what Jesus Christ has come into the world to do. He is proclaimed to be a Savior who "shall save His people *from their sins*." This is the object of His mission. True, He comes to give pardon, but He never gives pardon without giving repentance with it. He comes to justify, but He does not justify without also sanctifying. He has come to deliver us, not from you, O death, alone! Nor from you, O hell, alone! But from you, O sin, the mother of death, the progenitor of hell! The Redeemer lays His axe at the root of all the mischief by killing sin and thus, as far as we are concerned, He puts an end to death and hell. Glory be to God for this! Now, it does seem to me that if the very commencement of the Christian faith is so manifestly connected with death to sin, they do us grievous injustice who suppose that in preaching faith in Jesus Christ, we ignore the moralities or the virtues, or that we think little of sin and vice. We do not so, but we proclaim the only method by which moral evil can be put to death and swept away. The reception of Christ is an avowal of the crucifixion of the flesh with the affections and lusts—what more can the purest moralist propose? What more could he avow himself?

II. But secondly, AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE RECEPTION OF CHRIST IS ATTENDED WITH THE CRUCIFIXION OF SIN. I shall now state my own experience when I believed in Jesus. And while I am doing so, I rejoice to remember that there are hundreds, if not thousands in this place who have experienced the same. And there are millions in this world, and millions more in heaven, who know the truth of what I declare. When I believed that Jesus was the Christ and rested my soul in Him, I felt in my heart, from that moment, an intense hatred to sin of every kind. I had loved sin before, some sins particularly, but those sins became, from that moment, the most obnoxious to me, and though the propensity to them was still there, yet the love of them was clean gone. And when I at any time transgressed, I felt an inward grief and horror at myself for doing the things which before I had allowed and even enjoyed. My relish for sin was gone. The things I once loved I abhorred and blushed to think of.

Then I began to search out my sins. I see, now, a parallel between my experience in reference to sin and the details of the crucifixion of Christ. They sent Judas into the garden to search for our great Substitute, and just in that way, I began to search for sin, even for that which lay concealed amid the thick darkness of my soul. I was ignorant and did not

know what sin was, for it was night in any soul, but being stirred up to destroy the evil, my repenting spirit borrowed lanterns and torches, and went out as against a thief. I searched the garden of my heart through and through, with an intense ardor to find out every sin. And I brought God to help me, saying, "Search me, O God, and try me, and know my ways." Nor did I cease till I had spied out my secret transgressions. This inward search is one of my most constant occupations. I patrol my nature through and through to try and arrest these felons, these abhorred sins, that they may be crucified with Christ. O you, in whom iniquity lurks under cover of your spiritual ignorance, arouse yourself to a strict scrutiny of your nature and no longer endure that your hearts should be the lurking-places of evil. I remember when I found my sin. When I found it, I seized it and I dragged it off to the judgment seat. Ah, my brethren, you know when that occurred to you—and how stern was the judgment which conscience gave forth. I sat in judgment on myself. I took my sin to one court and to another. I looked at it as before men and trembled to think that the badness of my example might have ruined other men's souls. I looked at my sin as before God and I abhorred myself in dust and ashes. My sin was as red as crimson in His sight and in mine also. I judged my sin and I condemned it—condemned it as a felon to a felon's death. I heard a voice within me which, Pilate-like, pleaded for it—"I will chastise him and let him go. Let it be put to shame just a little. Let not the wrong deed be done quite so often. Let the lust be curbed and kept under." But, ah, my soul said, "Let it be crucified. Let it be crucified." And nothing could shake my heart from this intent, that I would slay all the murderers of Christ, if possible, and let not one of them escape, for my soul hated them with a deadly hatred and would gladly nail them all to the tree. I remember, too, how I began to see the shame of sin. As my Lord was spit upon, mocked, and despitefully used, so did my soul begin to pour contempt upon all the pride of sin, to scorn its promises of pleasure and to accuse it of a thousand crimes. It had deceived me. It had led me into ruin. It had well-nigh destroyed me. I despised it, and poured contempt upon its briberies, and all it offered of sweetness and of pleasure.

O sin, how shameful a thing did you appear to be! I saw all that is base, mean, and contemptible concentrated in you. My heart scourged sin by repentance, smote it with rebukes, and buffeted it with self-denials. Then was it made a reproach and a scorn. But this sufficed not—sin must die. My heart mourned for what sin had done and I was resolved to avenge my Lord's death upon myself. Thus my soul sang out her resolve—

"Oh, how I hate those lusts of mine
That crucified my God.
Those sins that pierced and nailed His flesh
Fast to the fatal wood.
Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die.
My heart has so decreed:
Nor will I spare the guilty things

That made my Savior bleed."

Then I led forth my sins to the place of crucifixion. They would gladly have escaped, but the power of God prevented them, and like a guard of soldiery, conducted them to the gallows of mortification. The hand of the Lord was present and His all-revealing Spirit stripped my sin as Christ was stripped. He set it before my eyes, even my secret sin in the light of His countenance. Oh, what a spectacle it was as I gazed upon it! I had looked, before, upon its dainty apparel and the colors with which it had painted itself to make it look as fair as Jezebel, when she painted her face. But now I saw its nakedness and horror—and I was well-nigh ready to despair. But my spirit bore me up, for I knew that I was forgiven, and I said, "Christ Jesus has pardoned me, for I have believed in Him. And I will put the flesh to death by crucifying it on His cross." The driving of the nails, I remember, and how the flesh struggled to maintain its liberty. One, two, three, four—the nails went in and fastened the accursed thing to the wood with Christ, so that it could neither run nor rule—and now, glory be to God, though my sin is not dead, it is crucified and must eventually die. It hangs up there. I can see it bleeding out its life. Sometimes it struggles to get down and tries to wrench away the nails, for it would go after vanity. But the sacred nails hold it too fast—it is in the grasp of death and it cannot escape. Alas, it dies a lingering death, attended with much pain and struggling. But still it dies. And soon its heart shall be pierced through with the spear of the love of Christ and it shall utterly expire. Then shall our immortal nature no more be burdened with the body of this death, but, pure and spotless, it shall rise to and behold the face of God forever.

Now, I am not talking allegorically of things which ought to be realized, but as a matter of fact, remain mere ideas. I am describing in figure what happens in reality—for every man who believes in Jesus immediately bestirs himself to get rid of sin. And you may know whether he has believed in Jesus Christ or not by seeing whether there is a change in his motives, feelings, life, and conduct. Do you say that you doubt this? You may doubt what you like, but facts speak for themselves. There will come before me, I dare say, before this week is over, as there have almost every week of my life, men who have been slaves to intoxication made sober, at once, by believing in Jesus Christ. Women, once lost to virtue, who have become pure and chaste by believing in Jesus, will come, and so will men who were fond of all manner of evil pleasures, who have turned instantly from them, and have continued to resist all temptation because they are new creatures in Christ Jesus. The phenomenon of conversion is singular, but the effect of conversion is more singular still. And it is not a thing done in a corner—it can be seen every day. If it were merely an excitement in which men felt a distress of mind and then, by-and-by, thought they were at peace and became happy because self-satisfied, I should not see any particular good in it. But if it is true that regeneration changes men's tastes and affections, that it, in conclusion, changes them radically, making them altogether new creatures, if it is so, I say, then may God

send us thousands of conversions! And that this is so, we are quite sure, for we see it perpetually.

III. Thirdly, we go a step farther and say that THE RECEPTION OF JESUS CHRIST INTO THE HEART BY SIMPLE FAITH IS CALCULATED TO CRUCIFY THE FLESH.

When a man believes in Jesus, the first point that helps him to crucify the flesh is that *he has seen the evil of sin*, inasmuch as he has seen Jesus, his Lord, die because of it. Men think that sin is nothing, but what will sin do? What will it *not* do? The virus of sin, what will it poison? Yes, what will it *not* poison? Its influence has been baleful upon the largest conceivable scale. Sin has flooded the world with blood and tears through red-handed war. Sin has covered the world with oppression and so has crushed the manhood of many and broken the hearts of myriads. Sin begat slavery, tyranny, priestcraft, rebellion, slander, and persecution. Sin has been at the bottom of all human sorrows. But the crowning culminating point of sin's villainy was when God Himself came down to earth in human form—pure, perfect, intent on an errand of love—came to work miracles of mercy and redemption. Then sinful man could never rest till he had crucified his incarnate God. They coined a word when the Parliamentary party executed the king in England. They called the king's destroyers, "regicides," and now we must make a word to describe sin—sin is a *deicide*. Every sinner, if he could, would kill God, for he says in his heart, "No God." He means he wishes there were none. He would rejoice, indeed, if he could learn for certain that there was no God. In fact, that is the bugbear of his life, that there is a God—a just God who will bring him into judgment. His secret wish is that there were no religion and no God, for he might, then, live as he pleased.

Now, when a man is made to see that sin, in its essence, is the murderer of Emmanuel, God with us, his heart being renewed, he hates sin from that very moment. "No," he says, "I cannot continue in such evil. If that is the true meaning of every offense against the law of God—that it would put God Himself out of His own world if it could—I cannot bear it." His spirit recoils with horror, as he feels—

"My sins have pulled the vengeance down
Upon His guiltless head.
Break, break, my heart, oh burst my eyes!
And let my sorrows bleed.
Strike, mighty grace, my flinty soul,
Till melting waters flow,
And deep repentance drowns my eyes
In undissembled woe."

Then *the believer has also seen, in the death of Christ, an amazing instance of the great grace of God*, for if sin is an attempt to murder God—and it is all that—then how wonderful it is that the creatures who committed this sin were not destroyed at once. How remarkable that God should consider it worth His while to devise a plan for their restoration. And yet He did, with matchless skill, contrive a way which involved the giving up of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son. Though this was an

expense unequalled, yet He did not withdraw from it. He "so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." And this for a race of men who were the enemies of their good and gracious God. "From now on," says the believer in Christ, "I can have nothing to do with sin, since it does despite to so gracious a God. O, you accursed sin, to drive your dagger at the heart of Him who was all grace and mercy. This makes sin to be exceedingly sinful."

Further, *the believer has had a view of the justice of God*. He sees that God hates sin intensely, for when His only-begotten Son took sin upon Himself, God would not spare, even Him. That sin was not His own—in Him was no sin. But when He voluntarily took it upon Himself and was made a curse for us, the Judge of all the earth did not spare Him. Down from His armory of vengeance, He took His thunderbolts and hurled them at His Son, for His Son stood in the sinner's place. There was no mercy for the sinner's Substitute. He had to cry as never one cried, before or since, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Torrents of woe rushed through His spirit. The condemnation of sin overwhelmed Him. All God's waves and billows went over Him.

Now, when a man sees this wonderful fact, he can no longer think lightly of transgression. He trembles before the thrice holy Jehovah and cries in his secret heart, "How can I sin if this is God's opinion of it? If in His justice, He smote it so unsparingly, even when it was only laid by imputation upon His Son, how will He smite it when its actual guilt lies on me? O God deliver me from it."

The believer has also had one more sight which, perhaps, more effectually than any other, changes his view of sin. *He has seen the amazing love of Jesus*. Did you ever see it, my hearer? If you have seen it, you will never love sin again. O think, that He who was Master of all heaven's majesty came down to be the victim of all man's misery. He came to Bethlehem and dwelt among us, offering 30 years and more of toilsome obedience to His Father's will. And at the close, He reached the crisis of His griefs, the crowning sorrow of His incarnation—His bloody sweat and death agony. That was a solemn Passover which He ate with His disciples, with Calvary in full view. Then He arose and went to Gethsemane—

"Gethsemane, the olive press,
(And why so called let Christians guess).
Fit name, fit place, where vengeance strove,
And gripped and grappled hard with love.
'Twas there the Lord of life appeared
And sighed, and groaned, and prayed, and feared;
Bore all incarnate God could bear
With strength enough, and none to spare."

Behold how He loved us! He was taken to Pilate's Hall and there was scourged—scourged with those awful Roman whips weighted with little bullets of lead and made of the intertwisted sinews of oxen, into which they also inserted small slivers of bone, so that every blow, as it fell, tore

off the flesh. Our beloved Lord had to suffer this again and again, being scourged often, as that verse seems to intimate which says—

"He was* wounded *for our transgressions,
He was* bruised *for our iniquities:
The* chastisement *of our peace was upon Him.
And with His* stripes *we are healed."

Yet He loved us, still loved us. Many waters could not quench His love, neither could the floods drown it. When they nailed Him to the tree, He still loved us. When, every bone being dislocated, He cried in sad soliloquy, "I am poured out like water, all My bones are out of joint," He loved us still. When the dogs compassed Him and the bulls of Bashan beset Him round, He still loved us. When the dread faintness came upon Him till He was brought into the dust of death and His heart melted like wax, He still loved us. When God forsook Him and the sun was blotted out, and midnight darkness covered the midday and a denser midnight veiled His spirit—a darkness like that of Egypt, which might be felt—He loved us still. Till He had drunk the last dregs of the unutterably bitter cup, He still loved us. And when the light shone on His face and He could say, "It is finished," that light shone on a face that still loved us. Now, every man to whom it has been given to believe in Jesus and to know His love, says, "How can I offend *Him*? How can I grieve *Him*? There are actions in this life which I might otherwise indulge in, but I dare not now, for I fear to vex my Lord." And if you say, "Dare not, are you afraid of Him?" The answer will be, "I am not slavishly afraid, for into hell I can never go." What am I afraid of, then? I am afraid of that dear face, on which I see the guttering of tears which He once shed for me. I am afraid of that dear brow which wore the crown of thorns for me. I cannot rebel against such kindness—His bleeding love enchains me. How can I do so great a wickedness as to put my dying Lord to shame?" Do you not feel this, my beloved brethren? If you have ever trusted the Lord Jesus, you crouch at His feet and kiss the prints of His nails for very love. And if He would use you as a footstool, if it would raise Him any higher, you would count it the highest honor of your life. Yes, if He bade you go to prison and to death for Him, and would say it Himself, and put His pierced hands on you, you would go there as cheerfully as angels fly to heaven. If he bade you die for Him, though the flesh is weak, your spirit would be willing. Yes, and the flesh would be made strong enough, too, if Jesus did but look upon you, for He can, with a glance, cast out selfishness and cowardice, and everything that keeps us back from being whole burnt-offerings to Him. Is it not so?—

"Speak of morality!
You bleeding Lamb
The best morality
Is love to You!"

When we are once filled with love to You, O Jesus, sin becomes the dragon against which we wage a lifelong warfare. Holiness becomes our noblest aspiration and we seek after it with all our heart and soul and strength. If candid minds will but honestly consider the religion of Jesus

Christ, they will see that Christians must hate sin if they are sincere in their faith. I might go farther into that, but I will not.

IV. The last thing of all is this. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS WITH THE GOSPEL AND WHERE HE IS, HOLINESS MUST BE PROMOTED.

Let it never be forgotten that while the reception of Jesus Christ by simple faith is an avowal of death to sin and does bring with it an experience of hating sin—and is calculated to do so—there is one thing more. If, dear friends, in any work of revival, or ordinary ministry, there was nothing more than you could see or hear, I think that many criticisms and quibbles might be, at least, rational, but they are not so. One grand fact makes them forever unreasonable. Wherever Jesus Christ is preached, there is present One sublime in rank and high in degree. You will not suppose that I am speaking of an earthly potentate. No, I am speaking of the Holy Spirit—the ever blessed Spirit of God. There is never a gospel sermon preached by an earnest heart but what the Holy Spirit is there, taking of the things of Christ and revealing them unto men. When a man turns his eyes to Jesus and simply trusts Him—for we adhere to that as being the vital matter—there is accompanying that act—no, I must correct myself, there is as the cause of that act a miraculous, supernatural power which in an instant changes a man as completely as if it flung him back into nothingness and brought him forth into new life. If this is so, then believing in Christ is something very marvelous. Now, if you will turn to the third chapter of John's gospel and also to his epistles, you will see that faith is always linked with regeneration, or the new birth, which new birth is the work of the Spirit of God. That same third of John which tells us, "You must be born again," goes on to say, "And 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." Wherever there is faith in Jesus Christ, a miracle of purification has been worked in the heart. Deny this and you deny the testimony of the Scriptures, which say plainly, that, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "And whoever is born of God sins not; but he that is begotten of God keeps himself, and that wicked one touches him not." Why do you doubt, for we who are personal examples can assure you that it has been so in our case? I mean not that myself and one or two others affirm this, but the witnesses may be met with by hundreds and thousands—and they all agree in asserting that the power of the Holy Spirit has changed the current of their desires and made them love the things which are holy, just, and true. Therefore, sirs, whether you believe it or not, you must be so kind as to understand one thing from us very decidedly, namely—that if to preach salvation through faith is vile, we purpose to be still viler. Surely you cannot blame us for acting as we do if our standpoint be correct. If the preaching of the cross, though it is to them that perish foolishness, is to them that believe in Christ the wisdom of God and the power of God, we shall not give up preaching Christ for you. If it is so that men are made new creatures—that, while others are talking about morals, our gospel plants and pro-

duces them—we shall not give up work for talk, nor the efficient agency of the gospel for the inventions of philosophy.

To the front, my brethren, with the cross, more and more. In your schools and in your pulpits set forth Christ crucified as the sinner's hope more and more plainly. Bid the sinner look to Jesus! Look and live. The gospel is the great promoter of social order, the great reclaimer of the waifs and strays of society, the elevator of the human race. This doctrine of free pardon and gracious renewal, freely given to the most worthless upon their believing in Jesus Christ, is the hope of mankind. There is no balm in Gilead and never was—but this is the balm of Calvary, for there is the true medicine—and Jesus Christ is the infallible Physician. Do but try it, sinners! Do but try it! Look to Jesus and the passions which you cannot else overcome shall yield to His cleansing power. Believe in Jesus and the follies which cling to you, and crush you as the snakes engirdled Laocoon and his sons, you shall be able to untwist. Yes, they shall die at Jesus' glance and shall fall off from you. Believe in Jesus and you have the spring of excellency, the bath of purity, the source of virtue, the destruction of evil, the bud of perfection.

God grant us, still, to prove the power of the Lord Jesus in ourselves and to proclaim His power to all around us.—

"Happy if, with our last breath,
We may but gasp His name;
Preach Him to all,
And cry in death,
Behold, behold, the Lamb!"

Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Galatians 5.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—278, 317, 432 AND "SAFE IN THE ARMS OF JESUS."

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THE SONG OF SONGS
NO. 1240

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 13, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Sing, O you heavens, for the Lord has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel."
Isaiah 44:23.

NO doubt this prophecy had *a* fulfillment in the restoration of the captive Jews from Babylon, in the rebuilding of the temple, and the completion of the walls of Jerusalem. This made the nation rejoice with unspeakable joy and made them cry, "Sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem." This was *a* fulfillment, but not the fullest accomplishment of the soul-stirring prophecy before us. A larger blessing was yet to come, to make every word emphatic and to enlarge the area of the joy till all the earth and all the spheres of heaven should take part in it. I shall spend no time upon the minor meanings of the passage, but speak at once of that redemption, of which all the rest are but types, the redemption of the true Israel of God by Christ Jesus our Lord. To that redemption, the words of our text are preeminently applicable. "Sing, O you heavens; for the Lord has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel."

In considering the text, we shall first *survey the scenery of the prophecy*. Secondly, we shall *contemplate the exceedingly glorious subject for joy*. Having attended to both of these matters, we will, for a little while, *listen to the* song. And then, in the last place, if the Spirit of God shall graciously help us, *we will join in the universal chorus*.

I. LET US SURVEY THE SCENE. The scene of our text is noteworthy. We saw its earthly parallel yesterday. The heavens were overcast, the clouds were dense, the sky was black, the sun was obscured and albeit, it is near midsummer, a chill came over us. Far overhead rolled the loud thunder. The dread artillery of heaven pealed forth as in the day of the Lord's battle. We expected a terrific tempest and timid hearts began to quail. Who knew where the bolts of heaven might fall and what mischief the flames of fire might work? The coward's fears were groundless—the storm had gathered for other fields than ours. There fell a shower which blessed the earth—

"Down, down they come, those fruitful showers.
Those earth-rejoicing drops.
A momentary deluge pours,

Then thins, decreases, stops.
And before the dimples on the stream
Have circled out of sight,
Lo! From the sun a joyous gleam
Breaks forth, of amber light."

Then the ever gracious Lord hung out across the heavens His bow of beauty—the covenant token—as if to assure us that He was not about to destroy the earth with a flood. Soon the swift winds blew and cloud after cloud disappeared, till, as we went forth to walk beneath the gladsome trees and amidst the laughing flowers, the thick clouds had gone and above us was the blue serene of heaven. Tempest and bolts of terror were far removed. Heaven shone on earth and earth smiled back on heaven. On such a spiritual scene, the prophet fixed his eye and he pictured it in the verse which precedes my text. A cloud, even a thick cloud of sin, shut out the light of God's countenance from His people and turned its dark side on their upward gazing eyes. Sins and transgressions interposed like a curtain, no, rather like a wall of brass, between the sinful people and their God, so that their prayers could not pass through to Him, nor could His favor shine down on them. They cowered down in terror as they heard the voice of God threatening judgment—and they expected every moment that He would overthrow them in His wrath. Lo. Instead thereof, the Lord hung out the covenant rainbow. Gospel promises were seen, Jesus was set forth as the great atoning sacrifice, and as men looked upon Him, gleams from the light of God's countenance filled them with hope. Nor did they hope in vain, for soon the Lord fulfilled, as in a moment, the Word in which it is written, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins." So, going forth and returning to their God beneath that clear sky, from which the Sun of Righteousness shone down with beams of love, the forgiven people were filled with rejoicing and by the mouth of the prophet, they cried aloud, "Sing, O heaven. Clouds veil you no longer. Shout, you lower parts of the earth, which have been refreshed with fertilizing showers. Shout, O you forest trees, whose every bough has been hung with diamond drops, for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel." Thus the scenery of the text is helpful to the full understanding of it. Read the two verses together and their beauty is seen.

When did the joyous event take place which we are bid to celebrate with song? We may consider it as virtually accomplished *in the eternal counsels of God*, for our Lord is, "The Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world." When the covenant was made between the Father and the Son, and Jesus undertook to die as a substitute for His chosen people, then the cloud was gone and the Lord could look upon His elect with complacency, as redeemed by their Surety's pledge. Viewing them as guilty, His holy eyes could not endure them, but looking upon them as in Christ Jesus, regarding them through the atonement, He cast their iniquities behind His back and was well-pleased with them, "for His Righteousness' sake." At the thought of the covenant, "ordered in all things and sure," the universe of intelligent beings may well rejoice, for therein

man's redemption and God's glory are joined together by an eternal decree. On the strength of that covenant, multitudes entered heaven before the great Surety had shed His blood—it was, therefore, a legitimate theme for holy song before the long appointed day had dawned.

The clouds were actually removed *when the atonement was presented*. In the fullness of time, Jesus appeared and up to the tree carried all the sins of His people. Having all His life carried their sicknesses and sorrows, He bore the burden of sin to the place of its annihilation, and by His death he made an end of it. Apart from the atonement, the chosen of God, like other men, lay under sin. The black cloud was over all the race, but Jesus took the dense mass of all the transgressions of His people—past, present and to come—and obliterated the whole, even as a cloud is blotted out from the face of heaven. Jesus took the whole incalculably ponderous load, all charged with tempest as it was, and bore it all upon those shoulders which must have been crushed to the earth had they not been divine. On the tree, He bore that sin and the wrath which was due to it, feeling all its crowded tempests in His own soul, until in that moment when He had borne all and ended all, He sent up the victorious shout of, "It is finished." Then shone forth the unclouded glory of boundless love; then was gone, forever, the threatened storm. Then righteousness sprang out of the earth and peace looked down from heaven. Then the reconciled ones might well exclaim, "Sing, O heavens; for the Lord has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel." Sin was put away, transgression was cast into the depths of the sea and loud over all rang out the jubilant challenge—"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who is he that condemns, now that Christ has died?"

The text also receives an actual fulfillment to each one of God's people in the moment *when the eye of faith is first turned to the crucified Savior*. I scarcely need to sketch that experience, for my brethren, you know it well. O, the blackness of the darkness above. O, the horror of the tempest within, in the dreadful hour of conviction of sin—when my weary soul longed for nothingness that it might escape from its own hell. O, the dread of the wrath to come. I saw all God's indignation gathering up to spend itself upon me, but glory be to God, it spent itself elsewhere.—

"The tempest's awful voice was heard;
O Christ, it broke on Thee!
Your open bosom was my ward,
It braved the storm for me.
Your form was scarr'd, your visage marr'd,
Now cloudless peace for me."

Well do I remember the day in which I looked to Jesus and was lightened in a moment. The rain was over and gone, and all was peace and joy. Oh, that blessed day! I went forth with joy and was led forth with peace. The mountains and the hills broke forth before me into singing and all the trees of the field did clap their hands. Nor has the joy departed. For me, the mountains are still singing and the trees still clap their

hands. For still my heart is glad within me at every mention of the precious name of Jesus. His blood still speaks peace within my conscience and His finished sacrifice is still my joy.

This also comes true not only at first, *but frequently during the Christian life*, for there are times when our unbelief makes new clouds and threatens new storms. Though our sin was all forgiven at the very first, and when we were first washed we were clean every whit, so that we needed not ever afterwards to wash again, except to wash our feet, yet unbelief can revive the memories of sin and defile the conscience with dead works, and so it can create clouds between us and God. Nevertheless, when our Lord reveals Himself, He blots out our sins like a cloud and like a thick cloud our transgressions, and again we return unto Him and rejoice in Him. We need not come under these returning glooms and we ought not to do so—but should it happen to us that we come under a cloud—it will be a blessed thing to look up and remember that the Lord can clear the skies in a moment and turn our dreariest shades into the brightness of the morning.

The text will obtain its best fulfillment, I think, *at the day of the Lord's appearing*—that day around which our chief hopes must ever center. The day will come when the gospel shall have been preached for the last time—when the chosen of God shall have been all gathered out from among men and the dispensation shall be fulfilled. Then shall all the saints rise to glory at the call of God. The elect multitude shall all be there—everyone according to the purpose of the Father, everyone according to the redemption of the Son, everyone according to the calling of the Spirit—all there—and upon their faces there shall be no spot nor wrinkle, and on their garments no stain nor defilement, for they are without fault before the throne of God. Then, as the books are opened and the transgressions of the ungodly are published under heaven, they shall stand without trembling, for—

"Jesus, Your blood and righteousness
Their beauty are, their glorious dress.
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall they lift up their head."

Yes, and *we* shall be there who have believed in Jesus, every one of us. And with what delight, as we reflect upon our sins, shall we see the all-covering atonement, the cross which crucified our sins, the sepulcher which swallowed up in an eternal death all our transgressions, the ascension which led captivity captive and the second coming which gave to us the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body, and perfected us so that no trace of sin's mischief can be found upon us. No damage shall be sustained by our humanity. We shall come up out of the furnace of life's trials with not the smell of fire upon us. Though the temptation and the guilt were like a seven-times heated furnace, yet because He, the Son of God, came into the burning furnace with us, we shall live and come forth unscathed. And in the last day, our humanity shall have suffered no harm, but shall even be brighter and better than if it had never fallen. Ah, what notes will be heard. Not the sound of cornet, flute, harp, sack-

but, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, as in the days of Babylon's idolatries, but blessed songs of holy adoration shall be heard, to which angels' harmonies shall keep tune and this shall be the hymn—"Sing, O you heavens; for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel."

II. We have now reached the second part of our subject and therefore, LET US CONTEMPLATE THE GLORIOUS SUBJECT FOR JOY. The great subject of joy is *redemption*—the redemption of God's Israel. *This is a stupendous work*. It was a simple matter for man to sell himself into slavery, but to redeem him was another matter. This is the work, this is the labor! To redeem man from his iniquity is a work which all the cherubim and seraphim could not have accomplished. A work, indeed, which all creatureship would have failed to perform. My brethren, our slavery was terrible and the price of deliverance was far beyond mountains of silver and gold. The redemption of the soul is precious. "It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold." As there needed a price, so there was needed a power, to redeem. For with a high hand and an outstretched arm must Israel be brought out of Egypt—and where could such power be found? Neither angel nor archangel possessed it. And as for the sons of man, the insects which dance through a summer's eve are not feebler. Hopeless is human bondage unless the malice and craft and power of Satan can be matched by love and wisdom and a superior force at all points. The price has been found, the power has been displayed. Sing, O you heavens, for the Lord has found a ransom! We were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ and that price has effectually set us free. Break forth into singing, you mountains, for the Lord has also found the power—His own right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory. He has brought up His people out of the house of bondage and made them free, indeed.

Of redemption, redemption by price and by power, we are bidden to sing, a redemption so *pre-eminently desirable* that we can never sufficiently value it, a redemption which has delivered us from sin, of all slaveries the worst. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Christ has effectually redeemed you from its tyrannical sway. You enjoy, also, deliverance from the curse of the law, by Christ's being made a curse for us. As it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." You are blessed with deliverance from misery—wherever there is sin, misery is sure to follow—but Jesus has borne the penalty for your sins and turned it aside from you. You are delivered from carking care and unbelieving anxiety. The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keeps your heart and mind by Jesus Christ. And you are delivered from death and hell. Let this thought thrill you with delight—in your ear can never ring the doleful sentence, "Depart, you cursed." For you there is no bottomless pit, no fire which cannot be quenched, no worm which can never die. Christ has delivered you. You are no longer slaves to sin and victims to death, for

you are set free from the thralldom of Satan who has the power of death. He may tempt, but he cannot force. He may provoke, but he cannot subdue. Christ has undone the devil's work. He has cast him down from his throne and torn up his stronghold—his empire over you is ended, never to be renewed. In you who have believed, the Lord has set up His throne and there He will reign forever. Glory be to God for this. The Lord's redemption is the theme of ceaseless praise, for it is a redemption which brings in its train, hope, holiness, and heaven, deliverance from sin, likeness to Christ, and eternal glory with Christ. Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth!

Brethren, the very center and emphasis of the song seems, to me, to lie in this—"*The Lord has done it.*" How my heart delights in those five words, "The Lord has done it!" Look at them for a minute. Whatever God does is the subject of joy to all pure beings. God in action is the delight of an intelligent universe. When God created the world, the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. I can well conceive that they kept a more than ordinarily joyous festival on that Seventh Day, when the Lord "rested and was refreshed." Wondrous expression! If we were perfect, everything that God did would cause us to sing—and as He is always acting—we should be always singing. Ah, if He smote us, it would make us bless Him, if we were clean divorced from sin. If salvation were the work of man, our scantiest notes might suffice, for what is man but a worm, a creature that is crushed before the moth? For what is he to be accounted of? But when we sing of redemption, it is the Lord's redemption. He planned it from the beginning. He carried it out in the person of His Son. He applies it by His Holy Spirit. Salvation is of the Lord. "The Lord has done it." You who choose, may invent a salvation that is partly by man and partly by God, and you may cry this up as much as you please. As for me, I have no desire for any salvation but that which is all of God, neither is there any other. This one note shall occupy my entire being—"The Lord has done it." "The Lord has done it." Every new convert who has newly found peace knows that the Lord has done it. Every man who has been for years a believer, and has learned his own weakness, will say clearly, "The Lord has done it." Ay, and the aged Christian, just about to depart, is the man to say, "The Lord has done it." Grace reigns without a rival. The Lord alone is exalted. Sing, O heavens, and be joyful O earth, for redemption is Jehovah's work.

It is sweet to reflect that *redemption is an accomplished fact*. It is not, "The Lord will do it," but, "The Lord has done it." If I were sent, this morning, as a prophet to tell you that the Lord would become incarnate, bleed, and die on Golgotha, I hope that some would believe it. But it may be you would find it difficult to realize it, and as Abraham did, to see Christ's day and be glad. For it is a marvel not to be believed at all, except upon divine testimony, that God Himself should make atonement for injury done to His own moral government. But I have, today, to speak of a matter of history—"The Lord has done it." He who was the offended one has provided a propitiation—His own deed of transcendent grace has

scattered the thick clouds of sin and poured eternal day upon the darkened earth. Jesus has bled and died and vanquished sin thereby. Our glorious Samson lay asleep in the Gaza of the tomb and His foes thought they had Him fast forever. But He awoke before the morning light, and He pulled up the gates of death and hell, post and bar and all, and carried them away, leading captivity captive. He has done it. Our divine deliverer has spoiled death and the grave for us. "Sing, O you heavens: shout, you lower parts of the earth." The Breaker is gone up before us and our King at the head of us. He has broken up and cleared a pathway straight from the tomb to the throne of God. Glory be to His name, He has done it.

We may lay peculiar force upon the word, "The Lord has *done* it," for *He has finished the work*. In the matter of the redemption of His people, nothing remains to be done. There is no mortgage on the church of God to be ultimately discharged. The Lord has made us His unencumbered freehold and we are His own portion forever. There is not a little left of human merit for the sinner to work out for himself, or some little point in which the work of salvation is incomplete, but "The Lord has done it." No, brethren, even the fringe of the robe of righteousness is all there—you have not a thread to add to it—it is without seam and woven from the top throughout, all of one piece. *Consummatum est*. "It is finished," every type fulfilled, every commandment kept, every sin abolished—the wrath of God and everything that hindered put away. "The Lord has done it." The heavens sang when Jesus came to do the deed. They woke the silence of the sheepfolds when the heavenly babe was born—how must they sing now that He has finished the work which was committed to Him and perfected forever all those who were set apart! I cannot speak on such a theme. Language is too poor a medium for the expression of my grateful joy. I wish that we could pause and sing the text—"The Lord has done it: He has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel."

A very important part of the song, however, lies in the fact that *what God has done glorifies Himself*. Infinite mercy and condescending love reflect glory upon God. What a subject for a Dr. Owen to write upon—the attributes of God as displayed and glorified in redemption. He would need a score of volumes, all crowded with such condensed thought as he was apt to give forth. What a chapter should be written on the *wisdom* of redemption! What another chapter upon the *justice* of it! How the Lord would not pardon sin without a sacrifice, because He was just, and could not tolerate iniquity. What another chapter, no, what volumes upon volumes might be composed upon the *love* of redemption! The fear would be that our finite minds, in beholding the brightness of one divine attribute, would be so dazzled as to forget the rest. Who can tell us, concerning the atonement, which of its letters best is written—the wisdom, the justice, or the grace? In redemption you see all the attributes of God, blended in harmony, shining with benignant radiance, not with the flash and flame of Sinai, but with the soft beams of peace and love from Calvary. God is never so gloriously seen as at the cross. No, not even amidst the flaming

seraphim do the saints above enjoy such a view of God as when they see Him in the wounds of Jesus, and putting their finger into the print of the nails, they exclaim with transport, "My Lord and my God."

Why, my brethren, the Lord has not only illustrated every one of His attributes in the great plan of redemption, but He has been pleased to show how the goodness of His nature triumphs over all the power of evil. Satan seemed to have gained a great advantage over God when he poisoned our race with his venom. The advantage was but temporary and it ended in his greater defeat. Little did he know that by his craft and malice he was preparing a black background for divine love to lay its lovely tints upon that they might be the more conspicuous. How are you baffled in your dark designs, O Lucifer! How are you vanquished, O you enemy! How are you spoiled, O you spoiler! How are you led captive, O captivity! You thought that man would be your weak and willing instrument with which to show your spite against the Most High, but lo, man, whom you did disgrace and dishonor, triumphs over you on God's behalf. The seed of the woman whom you did beguile has been wiser than you. His bruised heel has been the breaking of your head. He has all things under His feet—all sheep and oxen, yes, and the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatever passes through the paths of the sea. The man Christ Jesus is Lord of all and at His name all creatures bow the knee. Even the devils are subject unto Him and evil is overruled for good. See how the Lord "frustrates the token of the liars, and makes diviners mad." Let the Lord be praised forever and ever.

The Lord has also glorified Himself by raising up a race of creatures such as could not have been created by mere power, at least, so far as we can judge. God has a company of angels to worship Him, but they never knew evil, and consequently, their choice of good is not so marvelous. They are also of an ethereal nature and are not cumbered with material bodies of flesh and blood. The Lord might have created myriads more of pure spirits like the angels, but He desired to be served and loved by beings who should be, in part, material, and yet should be akin to Himself—beings who should possess freedom of will and should know both good and evil—and yet should forever choose good alone. Behold how such creatures have been produced! Not so much by creation as by redemption. The glorified were once plunged deep into sin, but they were, without a violation of their free agency, recovered to their allegiance by the love of Jesus and then lifted up into such a position that in Christ Jesus they are akin to God Himself, so that no order of beings intervenes between them and God. And yet they never will, nor can presume, nor take ambitious advantage of their elevated position. If God were to create free agents, knowing both good and evil, and put them where men will be in heaven without their undergoing any preparatory process, it would be a dangerous experiment. But for Him to let them know evil to the full and yet be forever bound to perfect holiness, because infinite love sways them with Omnipotent obligations of gratitude—this is to make creatures which bring exceeding glory to their Author. These are not merely fash-

ioned on His wheel, but dipped into the blood of His own suffering and indwelt by His own mighty power—well may they be precious in His sight. "Glory, glory, how the angels sing," but far louder are the notes of the redeemed. "Glory, glory," thrice and sevenfold told is that which comes from those loud harps of ransomed ones who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The Lord has glorified Himself in Israel.

I cannot linger here, though the subject fascinates me, for I have to speak somewhat upon the third point, which is,

III. LET US LISTEN TO THE SONG. The angels sing, for they have deep sympathy with the redemption of man. The redeemed in glory sing, for they have been the recipients of this mighty mercy. The material heavens themselves also ring with the sweet music and every star takes up the refrain. And with sun and moon they all praise the Most High.

Descending from heaven, the song charms the lower earth and the prophet calls upon materialism to share in the joy—mountains and valleys, forests and trees are charged to join the song. Why should they not? This round earth of ours has been overshadowed by the curse through sin. She has yet to be unwrapped of all the mists which iniquity has cast upon her, for the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him that subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Therefore, let creation sing. What mountain is there that has not been defiled with idolatry? Lo, the altars of Chemosh and the high places of Baal! But sing, you mountains, for the God of the hills is revealed and has purged you by the blood of Calvary. What valley is there which man has not polluted with sin? In the plains, which should have been sacred to peaceful harvests, men have shed the blood of their fellows in fierce battle, and cities have been built which have become the strongholds of iniquity. But sing, you valleys and you fruitful plains, for the Lord shall walk through you and make you as the valley of Barachah where the men of Judah sang, "Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures forever." Therefore the name of the place was called the Valley of Blessing unto this day. You forests, where wild beasts have been invaded by still wilder men, break forth into singing, for no more shall the destroying hand of the Lord be upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan! You groves which have witnessed the cruel rites of bloody worship, sing, for down your aisles shall now be heard the holy hymn which chants redeeming love. O you green trees, under which men have polluted themselves, beneath your shade shall saintly spirits find retreats prepared for prayer and praise. Break forth into singing, you mountains. Sing, O Moriah, on whose summit the patriarch drew his knife to slay his son, for the true Isaac has been offered up. God has provided for Himself a lamb. Sing, O Sinai, for the law proclaimed from your awful summit has now been magnified and rendered honorable. Sing, O Pisgah, for now that Christ has died, from your peak may be seen a promised land into which

the servants of the Lord shall not be denied an entrance. Sing, O Carmel, for the controversy between God and Baal has been decided once and for all. Sing, O Hermon, for now the gentle dews of brotherly love shall fall upon and keep not silent. Sing, O Gilboa, once accursed, for the Son of David gives you back your dew. Sing, O Tabor, for Messiah transfigured has become the image of the future race. Sing, O Olivet, for where Jesus groaned and bled He comes to plant His foot to establish bliss and holiness forever. The text exhorts the lower parts of the earth to shout, and well they may, for in the hands of the redeeming Lord are the deep places of the earth. Let the valleys respond to the song of the hills. Shout, O valley of Shaveh, you that are called the king's vale, for now the great Melchizedek has brought forth the true bread and wine for the seed of Abraham. Shout, O Eshcol, for your richest clusters are outdone by the true vine which the Lord has planted. O valley of the Jordan, shout, for in your river the Redeemer was baptized. O valley of Baca, rejoice, for the Lord Jesus has filled your pools. O vale of Achor, shout, for you are now a door of hope. O you wildernesses and solitary places, be glad, for redemption shall make you blossom as the rose. Let every tree in the forest bless the Lord; let each one yield boughs with which to strew the way before the lowly Prince. Fruitful trees and all cedars, praise the Lord. Down the fir trees' pillared shade let the soft murmur of praise be heard. And beneath our island's giant oaks let the glorious gospel be proclaimed. Praise the Lord you elms, as peace sports down your ancient avenues. Praise Him you far-spreading beeches, as beneath your shade the flocks feed in plenty. And you, you pines, forever clad in verdure, join the song. Let not a single herb be silent, nor even the hyssop upon the wall be dumb. I cannot reach "the height of this great argument," nor can any man besides, I suppose, unless he were a Milton and had a soul inspired at once with loftiest poetry and divine grace.

The meaning of the whole seems to be this, that wherever saints are, they ought to praise God for redeeming love, whether they climb the Alps or descend into the plains. Whether they dwell in the cities or walk in the quietude of the woods—in whatever state of mind they feel themselves—they still should praise redeeming grace and dying love. Whether on the mountaintop of communion, or in the valley of humiliation—whether lifted up by prosperity or cast down by adversity—they should leave a shining trail of praise behind them in their daily course, even as does the vessel when it plows the sea.

The text calls upon all classes and conditions of men to praise God for redemption. You that are lifted up like mountains—magistrates, princes, kings, and emperors—and you who lie beneath like plains, you who eat bread in the sweat of your faces, you children of poverty and toil, rejoice in redeeming love. You who dwell in the midst of sin as in a tangled forest, you who have transgressed against God and plunged into the deep places of vice, be glad, for you may be restored. All you born of woman, together, praise the Redeemer of Israel, for He has accomplished the salvation of His people.

IV. LET US JOIN THIS SONG. Mr. Sankey is now behind me, but he cannot sing sweetly enough to set forth to the full the majesty of this song, nor could the choicest choir of singing men and singing women. No, this task exceeds the reach of the seraphim themselves. Praise is silenced, O Lord, by the glory of Your love. Yet, brethren, let us give forth such music as we have.

Let us consider how we sing this song. We sing it when by faith we see the grand truth of God that Jesus Christ took His people's sin upon Himself and so redeemed them. Understanding this fact, which is the heart of the gospel, we begin to sing for joy. Get a grip of that, my brethren, and hold it fast—your hearts will then sing—you cannot help it. Not all the harps of heaven can be more melodious than your song will be when your heart fully understands this fact—that Jesus Christ did actually stand in His people's place and finished transgression and brought in everlasting righteousness for them. You will sing it better still, if the Holy Spirit has applied it to your soul, so that you can say, "My sins are blotted out like a cloud, and like a thick cloud my transgressions." "Through Jesus' blood I am clean, I am accepted in the Beloved. I am dear to the heart of God. On me there remains now no spot nor wrinkle for I am cleansed through Jesus Christ." Nothing else can bring forth such charming music from any man's mind as a sense of redeeming grace and dying love.

You will still be better able to sing this if you every day realize the blessings of redemption and pardon, by drawing near to God, using the privilege of prayer; by trusting the Lord for everything; by enjoying sonship and communing with your heavenly Father, as you seek to bear the image of the heavenly as truly as you have borne the image of the earthly. Yes, you will sing it, by the grace of God, right beautifully, if you are fully consecrated to the Lord's service and are borne along by the irresistible current of divine love. O, if it is so with you, beloved, you will be forever crying, "Sing, O heavens, for the Lord has done it."

I think I hear from different parts of the building the lament, "Alas, we cannot sing, for we have not believed in Jesus and Christ has not put away our sin." Listen a minute and I have done. Sinner, though you have not this redemption, yet I would still have you sing about it, for it is precisely what you need. You are slaves to sin and ought you not to bless God that there can be such a thing as *redemption?* If I had been a slave in the old slave days, even though I had small chance of being redeemed, yet the word redemption would have been a sweet morsel to me. And if I heard of others being redeemed, if I sang at all, I should choose for my theme, redemption. So may you, poor soul. Many are redeemed and are rejoicing in it, why should it not come to you? At any rate, begin to hope.

Rejoice because salvation is a work done for you by another. "The Lord has done it." A redemption in which you had to find a part of the price would not make you sing, for you are too poor to contribute a farthing. But the Lord has found the whole cost to the utmost penny. If ever you are saved, it must be by power beyond your own, for you are weak as wa-

ter. Be glad, then, that the Lord has done it. If you can ever get that thought into your mind, (and I pray the Holy Spirit will put it there), that your salvation was completed on the tree by the Lord Jesus, why, I think you will, with joy, shout forth the Redeemer's praise.

Think again. "The Lord has done it," even He whom you have offended. The God whom you have grieved has condescended to work our your redemption. Ought not this to make your soul say, "Would God it were for me"? and then begin to sing even at the bare possibility of such a thing.

Then, sinner, listen. Your sin can be blotted out. You have tried to remove the stain, but all in vain. That scarlet stain abides, and though you were to wash your hands in the Atlantic till you reddened every wave, that blot would never disappear. No finite power can ever remove the accursed spot. But it can be removed, for the text says He has blotted it out in the case of others. Why not, then, for you? This disease is not absolutely unto death—it may be cured. O sinners, those fetters are not, after all, eternal. They may be snapped. The bars in yonder window may be torn out so that you can escape into liberty. Begin to sing, then. Alas, I know you will not because I bid you, nor at any man's bidding, till grace sets you free. The only thing to make you sing is for you to realize salvation and O, may you do so at this moment by believing in Jesus. Have done with everything but Christ and drop into His arms. Rest in Him. Trust Him. Depend upon Him and all is well. And then will you cry aloud, "Sing, O you heavens, for the Lord has done it."—

"Come every soul by sin oppressed,
There's mercy with the Lord,
And He will surely give you rest
By trusting in His Word.
Only trust Him!
Only trust Him!
Only trust Him now!
He will save you.
He will save you.
He will save you now."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 44.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—96, 203, 428.

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HONEST DEALING WITH GOD
NO. 1241

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 20, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."
1 John 1:8, 9, 10.

"GOD is light, and in Him is no darkness at all," and consequently He cannot have fellowship with darkness. God is light, that is purity, and as the thrice Holy One, He can hold no communion with iniquity. God is light, that is knowledge, for all things are known unto the Lord, and with ignorance He has no affinity. God is light, that is truth, for He can neither err, nor break His word and therefore, He cannot smile on anything that is false. We are constantly erring, first on this side and then on that, for there is darkness in us. God is essentially light and it is not possible for His nature to be affected by either impurity or error. Out of this attribute of His nature arises the fact that the Lord always deals with things as they are. Man invents fictions, but God creates facts. We conceive of things as they appear, but God sees them as they exist. "Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart." The dress of things impresses *us,* but all things are naked and open before *Him.* The Lord never misrepresents, nor has fellowship with misrepresentation. We are forever hurrying about with our paint and varnish and tinsel—laboring to make the meaner thing appear equal to the more precious—and spending our skill in making the sham seem as brilliant as the reality. But all this is contrary to the way of the Lord. Everything is true in God and everything is seen in its reality by His all-discerning eyes. Because He is light, He deals with things in the light, treating them as they are. If God is to deal graciously with us, we must, each one, stand in the light, and present ourselves before Him as we are. If there is on our lips a false word, or in our heart a false thought, or in our mind a knowingly false judgment, we are out of the sphere in which God can have fellowship with us. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth."

Yet, dear friends, the natural tendency of our heart is to try and appear to be what we are not. We all have, more or less, to struggle against this tendency, for it assails the most truthful. That love of approval, which, rightly checked and kept in order, has its uses, very often pushes men on to pretend to be better than they are. Fear of censure is an equally powerful means of producing hypocrisy. We must, by all means, strive against the very beginnings of this frightful evil, for if it should ever

get the mastery over us it will make us altogether untruthful, and consequently, we shall be far removed from all power to walk with God. The Lord cannot stand with us on the platform of seeming and appearance, but only on the ground of what we really are. Therefore, in proportion as we are untrue, we cut ourselves off from God.

Our tendency to be false is illustrated in the chapter before us, for we find three grades of it there. There is first *the man who lies*—"If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." We say and do that which is untrue if, while abiding under the influence of sin and falsehood, we claim to have fellowship with God. If this tendency is left alone and unchecked, you will find the man growing worse and doing according to the 8th verse, in which it is written, "We deceive ourselves." Here the utterer of the falsehood has come to *believe his own lie*. He has blinded his understanding and befouled his conscience till he has become his own dupe. Falsehood has saturated his nature so that he puts darkness for light and light for darkness. This is, at once, his sin and his punishment. He closed his eyes so long that, at length, he has become stone blind. He will soon reach the complete development of his sin which is described in the 10th verse, when the man, who first lied and then, secondly, deceived himself, becomes so audacious in his falseness as to *blaspheme the Most Holy by making Him a liar*. It is impossible to say where sin will end. The beginning of it is as a little water in which a bird may wash and scatter half the pool in drops. But in its progress, sin like the brook swells into a torrent deep and broad. We must, therefore, judge ourselves very severely. If we do not, our natural tendency to falseness will lead us to false assertion as to ourselves and urge us on till we delude ourselves into the foolish belief that we are what we proudly represent ourselves to be. And then our sin escalates, in the desperation of our pride, to a point where we think God Himself is untrue.

Our only safe course—and may the Spirit of God grant us grace to follow it—is to come to God as we actually are and ask Him to deal with us in Christ Jesus according to our actual condition. If we are to walk with God at all, it must be in the light. And if we once walk in the light with Him, our condition will tally with the description of verse seven—we shall see sin in ourselves and daily feel the blood of Jesus Christ cleansing us. Only on the footing of sin daily confessed and pardoned can there be any fellowship between us and the eternal God this side of heaven, for that footing is the only one consistent with the facts of the case. Let us daily ask the Lord to keep us in a truthful spirit, admitting the truth, both concerning ourselves and our Lord, feeling its power, and desiring to He taught still more of it. Let us pray Him to deal with us, not according to our suppositions, but according to the facts, and let us entreat Him never to allow us to rejoice in fancied blessings, such as might satisfy our proud, half-stupefied conscience, but to give to us the real blessings of genuine forgiveness and effectual cleansing from all unrighteousness.

I intend at this time, as God may help us, first, to *consider the three courses* which lie open before us in the text; then, secondly, to *consider*

how to follow in the right course; and thirdly, it shall be my endeavor to lead you to *consider why you should do so.*

I. LET US CONSIDER THE THREE COURSES laid open before us in the text.

I will suppose that we are all earnestly anxious to be in fellowship with God. We cannot bear to be His enemies any longer. Distance from Him has become distasteful to us. We long, like the prodigal son, to arise and go to our Father that we may hereafter dwell in our Father's house. Our deceitful heart suggests to us, first, that we should *deny our present sinfulness,* and so claim fellowship with God on the grounds that we are holy and so may draw near to the Holy God. It is suggested to our hearts that we should say that, "We have no sin," and are neither guilty by act nor defiled in nature. This is a bold assertion and he who makes it has no truth in him, but at different times and by very different persons it has been made and stoutly maintained. There are many ways in which this proud saying has been justified. Some have arrived at it by denying altogether the doctrine of original sin, "as the Pelagians do vainly talk." They will not admit that there is a fault and natural corruption in the nature of every man whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness and therefore is of his own nature, inclined to evil. Now we, I trust, will always be clear from this doctrinal error, for we know, as David did, that we were shaped in iniquity and are—

"Sprung from the man whose desperate fall
Corrupts the blood, and taints us all."

I do not suppose that many of you are likely to say you have no sin on the ground of a disbelief of natural depravity, for many of you know this truth, not merely as a matter of creed, but as a terrible fact which has come home to you and caused you great sorrow. If, however, any of you should venture to plead that you have no sin on the ground that your nature is not evil, I do beseech you to rid your heart of that lie, for a lie it is, through and through. I don't care how honest your parents are, or how noble your ancestry was—there is in you a bias towards evil. Your animal passions, no, more—your mental faculties are unhinged and out of order—and unless some power beyond your own shall keep your desires in check, you will soon prove by overt acts of transgression the depravity of your nature.

It is not uncommon for others to arrive at the same conclusion by another road. They have the audacity to say that they have no sin by feelings and beliefs which they, as a rule, ascribe to the Holy Spirit. Now, if any man says that all tendency to sin is gone from him, that his heart is at all times perfect, and his desires always pure so that he has no sin in him whatsoever, he may have traveled a very different road from the character we just now warned you about, but he has reached the same conclusion and we have but one word for both boasters, it is the word of our text, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Some, however, have reached this position by another route. They plead that though it may be they have sin, yet they are not bad at heart.

They look upon *sin* as a technical term and though they admit, in words, that they have sin, yet they practically deny it by saying, "I have a good heart at bottom. I always was well-intentioned from the very first. True, what I have done does not appear to be right according to the very severe judgement of the law of God, but I cannot help that. I only followed my nature and cannot be blamed, for I never meant to do anything wrong, either to God or man. I have always been kind to the poor and have done the right thing all round. I know I have erred—of course we all have—here and there, but you cannot expect a fellow to be perfect. I can't say I see anything to find fault with in men." Thus you in effect say you have no sin. Though you compliment God by saying with the church service, "We are miserable sinners," you do not mean it at all. You mean that if you have sinned, it has been your misfortune and you are to be pitied rather than blamed. In so saying or feeling, you prove that the truth is not in you—you are either deplorably ignorant as to what holiness is, or else you are willfully uttering a lie. In either, case the truth is not in you.

A fourth sort of persons say the same thing, for albeit they confess that they have sinned, they think themselves now to be in a proper and fit condition to receive pardon. "We have prayed," they say. "We have repented; we have read the Scriptures; we have attended public worship and are as right as we can be. We have tenderness, contrition, and every right and proper feeling—our wonder is that we do not receive salvation." It would be a very great wonder to me if you did. It does not matter how you got there, you have virtually come to the same place as the others of whom I have spoken, for you believe that there is nothing about you which can operate against your salvation. You think you are ripe for mercy, fit for pardon—and what is this but declaring that you are not in a sinful state? All things are ready with *you* and you half insinuate that God is not ready—this is casting the blame of your unbelief upon God and disowning it yourself. According to your ideas, you are a poor innocent whom God delays to bless. You are willing and earnest enough and yet He passes you by—do you really believe this? Then, let me tell you that if any man dreams that he has a fitness or preparation for divine grace, he knows not what he speaks, for in the very nature of things, the only fitness for grace is the need of it. The idea of fitness is only another form of the vain notion of merit and it cannot find an inch of foothold in the gospel. True penitents can see nothing in themselves to commend them to mercy and therefore, they cast themselves upon undeserved favor, feeling both unworthy and unfit, but hoping to receive forgiveness freely.

Whatever shape our denial of our sinful nature and state may take, please remember that that denial is mere *talk* and nothing more—"If *we say* we have no sin." You know how little value we attach to evidence of the nature of, "I say," and, "They say." There may be no truth whatever in such evidence, and in the present case, there is nothing whatever to warrant the proud saying, "We have no sin." There will come a day when the righteous will have no sin, as a matter of fact, but now, whether saint or

sinner, if you say, "I have no sin," you say it and that is all. The words sound very pretty, but there is no fact to correspond with them.

Moreover, the idea of having no sin is a delusion—you are altogether deceived if you say so—the truth is not in you and you have not seen things in the true light. You must have shut your eyes to the high requirements of the law. You must be a stranger to your own heart. You must be blind to your own conduct and you must have forgotten to search your thoughts and to weigh your motives, or you would have detected the presence of sin. He who cannot find water in the sea is no more foolish than the man who cannot perceive sin in his members. As the salt flavors every drop of the Atlantic, so does sin affect every atom of our nature. It is so sadly there, so abundantly there, that if you cannot detect it, you are deceived.

This self-deceit has arrived by a good deal of persuading and ingenious trickery. To deceive another requires a measure of cunning, but to deceive yourself needs far more. Our deceitful heart reveals an almost Satanic shrewdness in self-deception—it readily enough makes the worse reason to appear to be the best reason—and it states a lie so that it wears the fashion of truth. If you say you have no sin, you have achieved a fearful success—you have put out your own eyes and perverted your own reason! You have fed upon falsehood till it has entered into your very being and rendered you incapable of truth. I know you claim to be very sincere in your belief of your own rightness. And I know it would be very hard to persuade you differently—and this makes it all the worse—for so much the more completely have you deceived yourself. Now that you call darkness, light, and boast that your blindness is true sight, we mourn over you as all but hopeless. And we fear lest the Lord should leave you to perish because you cling so fast to your lie.

In how many ways men manage to deceive themselves! They can do it by irreligion and by religion, too. They do it by outrageous sin and by boastful sanctity. They can mislead themselves by precious hymns—which rightly understood speak truth, but wrongly turned, speak desperate falsehoods by dwelling upon the work of the Spirit of God—which rightly taken is greatly for our consolation, but taken after the Pharisaic manner may itself be misconstrued and made to furnish wind for the bubble of vainglory. O friends, it is not without effort that men pervert the best things into excuses for pride, yes, turn even their meat into poison. It is not an easy thing to get up to sinlessness, nor is it an easy matter to keep the cheat from collapsing. The baseless fabric must be deftly put together and it will need much propping up and buttressing—it is almost as hard to seem to be as to be—perhaps I might say it is harder. Pity that men should be at such pains to make fools of themselves.

Let it be remembered, however, that while the man who has deceived himself says, "I have no sin," he has not deceived the Lord. God sees sin in us, if we do not. The ostrich is reported to bury her head in the sand and then to suppose herself safe, but she is the more speedily taken. And we may shut our eyes and say, "I have no sin," but in so doing, instead of securing eternal salvation, we shall as practically give ourselves up to the

destroyer as the bird of the desert is fabled to do. Let a man say, "I have no sin," and he has condemned himself out of his own mouth, for the text says of such a man the truth is not in him—and he who has not truth in him is not saved. The absence of confession of present sin means the absence of the light of truth and sincerity. God saves all sorts of people, however black their sins, but the man of a false spirit, the Pharisaic washer of the outside of the cup, while the inside is foul, is the last person who is likely to be saved. A main point in conversion consists in a man's being honest—for it is the honest and good ground which receives the seed. If you preach the gospel among the roughest and most profane of men, there is more hope of success among them than among hypocritical professors. Open enmity and opposition are better than that pretended friendship which begins and ends with the shallow compliments of empty formalism. Outward religiousness, unattended by heart piety, does a man serious injury by rendering him superficial and unreal in all that he does in reference to God—and as God desires truth in the inward parts, He will not parley with dishonest men. Pretend and profess and boast how you will, but understand this—the living God abhors everything which is not according to the strictest truth.

Now, all this may serve for our guidance when seeking the Lord. Awakened sinners often say, "If I could feel my heart was right towards God, then I could believe that He would look upon me in mercy." How wrong is this! If you felt that all was right, it would be an untruthful feeling, for by nature all is wrong. "Oh, sir," you say, "if I could but feel that now, at last, I am as I ought to be before God, as tender and as penitent as He would have me to be, then I could have hope." No, my dear friend, such a feeling would not be according to truth, for no man is as tender and as penitent as he ought to be. And if you felt you were, you would be feeling a *lie*, and so the truth would not be in you. I do not want you to feel that you are what you ought to be. I pray that you may admit that you are *not* what you ought to be. I would have you feel unrest and absence of anything like satisfaction, for such feelings will be according to the truth. I beseech you never claim to experience feelings which you do not feel, nor make hypocritical confessions of sin which you have never committed, nor pretend to a repentance which is not in you, for the Lord hates all shams and will only deal with you according to truth. If you are conscious of impenitence, go to the Lord and tell Him you have a hard heart which will not feel either the terrors of His law or the warmth of His love. In other words, go to Him just as you are and confess what you are, and ask Him to deal with you in Christ Jesus as He sees you to be. That is the only way—the plan of pretending that we are now free from sin will not work and bring us blessing, for, "We deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

The second course which is open to us is the one which I trust the divine Spirit may lead us to follow, *to lay bare our case before God exactly as it stands*. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." Please observe that John does not say, "If we confess our *sin*." He had been speaking of that in the

8th verse, but here he uses the plural, to include both sin in its essence and in its actual development in our life. We are to confess both the inward sin and the outward fruit of it. We must say, "Lord, I admit with shame that as my nature is corrupt, such has my life been. I am a sinner both by nature and by practice." Make the confession of the two things, of the cause and the effect, of the original depravity—the foul source—and then of the actual sin which is the polluted stream. And if you say, "How am I to confess it?" I would say this—To confess sin does not mean merely on some one occasion to repeat a catalog of sins before God in private, nor at certain set seasons to rehearse a list of our faults—it means a life-long acknowledgment of our sin. We must take our places as they who have sinned and never attempt to occupy the position of innocent beings. We are to look towards God as a man ought to look who has transgressed. Do you understand me? The Pharisee took up the posture and spirit of a man who had no sin in him and said, "God, I thank You." He was not confessing sin, but claiming righteousness—and he was not accepted because he was out of the light—that is to say, he was not speaking and feeling according to truth. But the publican, though he said little and made no confession of sin in detail, yet by his posture—by his striking his breast, by his not daring to look up, by the sigh which he heaved—was virtually confessing sin. When a man prayerfully begs that he may feel the power of the blood of Jesus, he is confessing sin, for is not the blood of Jesus necessary because of our sin? The daily exercise of faith in Jesus Christ is a confession of sin, for nobody would need to believe in a Savior unless he had sin. Baptism is a confession of sin—who needs to be buried with Christ if he is alive by a righteousness of his own? To come to the communion table and remember there the atoning sacrifice is a confession of sin—we would need no remembrance of our blessed Substitute if we were not sinners. Confession of sin is best carried out when we deal with God as those who have offended Him, not as those who feel that they are innocent. We are to act before the Lord as those who know that sin is in them. And how ought such to behave? They will walk with God very humbly and watchfully. They will be jealous lest inbred corruption should get the mastery of them. Such persons will daily cry to the strong for strength, and what is prayer for strength but a confession of weakness caused by sin? What is watchfulness but a confession that our nature still needs holding in check? So ought we to watch as those who feel that the battle is not fought, and therefore, we cannot lay down our armor or our sword. We should so live as those who know that the race is not run, and therefore, they press forward. We ought to be prayerfully dependent upon God, as those who know that if they were left by divine grace, they would go back unto perdition.

When a sinner feels he has no natural fitness for receiving the grace of God, when a broken spirit cries, "Oh, what a wretch I am! Not only my past sin but my present feelings disqualify me for the love of God. I seem to be made of hell-hardened steel." I think I hear him sighing—

"The rocks can rend; the earth can quake;
The seas can roar; the mountains shake—

Of feeling, all things show some sign,
But this unfeeling heart of mine!
To hear the sorrows You have felt,
Dear Lord, an adamant would melt.
But I can read each moving line
And nothing moves this heart of mine!
Your judgments, too, unmoved I hear,
Amazing thought which devils fear!
Goodness and wrath in vain combine
To stir this stupid heart of mine."

Now, this piteous outcry because all is wrong within is virtually a confession of sin and a truthful one, too, for *all is wrong*. If you feel you are desperately bad, remember you are worse than you think you are. Your case is, in itself, desperate, hopeless, and damnable. If you feel that you are lost, you do not feel too strongly, you are in the true light where God will meet with you. The Lord will not consent to meet with you on the ground that you are not much of a sinner and that after all your sin is not a great evil. No, He will meet you where the truth is and nowhere else. When you confess that you are unworthy of His pity, you are acknowledging the truth. And when you feel guilty, you feel what is really a fact. On this footing of truth, sad truth though it is, the Lord will meet with you through the atoning blood. It is in your vileness that sovereign grace over sin abounding will come to you and cleanse you. Therefore, the sooner you come to the honest truth, the better for you, for the sooner you will obtain joy and peace through believing in Christ. The text means just this—Treat God truthfully and He will treat you truthfully. Make no pretensions before God, but lay bare your soul. Let Him see it as it is and then He will be faithful and just to forgive you your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Mark the beauty of that expression—God will deal with you in *faithfulness*. His nature is mercy and you, naturally, expect that if you confess your sin to a merciful God, He will deal mercifully with you and be faithful to His nature. And He will be so. But He has also given a promise that if the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and turn unto the Lord, He will have mercy upon them—depend upon it—He will be faithful to His promise. The blood of Jesus Christ has made a full atonement and God will be faithful to that atonement. He will deal with you on the grounds of the covenant of grace, of which the sacrifice of Jesus is the seal and therein also He will be true to you.

What a blessing it is that the Lord will be faithful and just in the cleansing of you from all the sinfulness of your nature. I pray you deal honestly with God and say to Him, "Cleanse me, O God, from secret faults. You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden parts, You will make me know wisdom. Purge me, therefore, O Lord, and I shall be clean." Suppose you go to a surgeon because you have some deadly polyp or cancer growing in you? You need to have it removed and you know there are a great many physicians who will profess to cure such things, but in reality only give temporary ease. From all these you keep clear. You are well aware that if only a little root of the growth should be left, it

will grow again. So you say outright to the surgeon, "Sir, here is my disease. I will tell you all the symptoms of it—I only ask to have a thorough cure, cost me what it may in money or pain. I make no reserve. Do just whatever you think is best in the case, but make clean work of it. If you have the knife in your hand, do not spare it out of pity for my pain, but be just with me, cut out the disease, roots and all, so that it may be a complete cure." Even in the same manner, go to the Lord, and say, "Lord, here is my sin, I confess it all. Do not suffer me to have any peace unless it is true peace. Do not let me have any comfort unless I get it from Christ. And if there must be more conviction of sin and more alarm of conscience—if there must be deeper gashes and sterner cuts into my soul, Lord, do not spare me—be pleased to purge me from the secret depravity of my nature and make me pure. Your holiness is what I crave after and I cannot be satisfied till You make me holy, even as You are holy." This is the way to plead with God and the only way. Confess the sin and then He will be faithful and just to give you the double cure, namely, first, the forgiveness, and next, the cleansing from all unrighteousness.

Now, there are still some who say, "Well, yes, I think I could go to God in that way, sir, but oh, my past sins prevent me. I could tell Him I am sinful; I could ask Him to renew my nature; I could lay myself bare before Him, but oh, my past sins. All might yet be well if I had not so sinned." Ah, my brethren, that brings out a third course which lies before you, which I hope you will not follow, namely, *to deny actual sin*. The very thing, which I bless God, you cannot do would seal your doom, for it would lead you to make God a liar, and so His Word could not abide in you. If you felt able to say, "I have not sinned," in proportion as you said, that would put yourself out of the light in which God alone can walk with you. Some get to that point by saying that what they did was not really sin to any extent, or at any rate, if it would have been sin in other people; it was not sin in them. Considering their strong passions, they wonder they were not worse. And considering the circumstances of their case, they do not see how they could have done otherwise. In a word, they have not sinned at all. There is another class who say, "All these commandments have I kept from my youth up, what do I lack?" This self-justification clearly makes God a liar. For what does the cross of Calvary mean? What do those streams of blood mean? What do those agonies to the death mean? God has acted out a gigantic lie if we have no sin, for He has provided a propitiation for a thing which does not exist. O hideous profanity! O vile blasphemy, thus to insinuate that the great sacrifice of divine love was an acted falsehood! Brethren, we have sinned, sinned far beyond anything we know—and the only wise and true way is to confess it before God.

I find the first part of my subject has occupied much more time than I thought and therefore, I will be exceedingly brief upon the second head.

II. LET US NOW CONSIDER HOW WE CAN FOLLOW THIS COURSE, which is the only right and acceptable one, namely, *to confess our sin*. I suppose I am speaking to those who are in earnest about their salvation. O my friends lay bare your consciences before the law of God. Go and

open the 20th chapter of Exodus and read the Ten Commandments. Think of their *spirituality*—remember how he that looks on a woman to lust after her commits adultery with her in his heart—and let the law, with all its blaze of light, flash flame into your soul. Do not shirk the facts or shrink from knowing their full force, but feel the power of the condemning law. Then recollect your individual sins. Recall them one by one—those greater sins, those huge blots upon your character—do not try to forget them. If you have forgotten them, raise them from the grave and think them over and feel them as your own sins. Do not lay them at the door of anyone else. Do not look at circumstances in order to find alleviation for your guilt, but set them in the light of God's countenance. Remember, the sins of your holy things, your Sabbath sins, your sanctuary sins, your sins against the Bible, your sins against prayer, and your sins against the love of the Father, the blood of Christ, and the strivings of the Spirit. Oh, how many are these! Think of your sins of omission, your failures in duty, and your shortcomings in spirit. Repent of what you have done and what you have not done. How both these forms of iniquity may stagger and humble you!

Think of your sins of heart. How cold has that heart been towards your Savior. Your sins of thought, how wrongly your mind has often judged. And your sins of imagination; what filthy creatures your imagination has portrayed in lively colors on the wall. Think of all the sins of your desires and delights, and hopes and fears. What faculty is there that has not been defiled? "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." We are bound to confess the aggravations of our sin, how we sinned against light, and against knowledge, against conscience, and against divine love, against the monitions of the Holy Spirit, against tender warnings which came from His gentle voice. Oh, when some of us err, every ounce of our sin has as much evil in it as a ton of other men's sins. Let us take care that we confess all. And then let us try to see the heinousness of all sin as an offense against a kind, good, loving God—as sin against a perfect law intended for our good. Let us remember our wanton sins, our mischievous sins, sins which hurt ourselves, foolish sins, despicable sins into which our spirits have descended even though we have known the nobility of holiness and had some fellowship with God. I beseech you, dear hearer, try to fix your eyes on Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice and live as a believer in Him, and this will make you live as a constant confessor of sin. For when the wounds of Jesus speak peace, they also preach penitence. And when the atonement gives us rest, it also makes us meek and lowly in heart under a sense of abiding faultiness. As you see what Jesus suffered, you will see how you sinned. And as you observe the glory of His merit, you will see the horror of your own demerit. Thus may you daily, as long as you live, confess sin and find cleansing from all unrighteousness.

III. LET US CONSIDER WHY WE SHOULD CONFESS SIN. I shall say, first, do so because *it is right*. Religious lie-telling is a dreadful thing and there is plenty of it. If I could be saved by masking my condition before God, I would not like to be saved in that way. The man whose heart is in

the light loves to do right. It would he a great dishonor to God to suppose it possible that He will save us in any manner which would not accord with truth. It is right that we should come before God, as we are, and plead for mercy through Jesus Christ, and therefore, let us do it.

Moreover, upon some of us it is imperative, because *we cannot do anything else*. There may possibly be a person here who could say, "I have no sin." But I could not. Why, if I were to claim innocence, either of nature or practice, the words would choke me. Say I have no sin! I should expect to turn black in the face and fall down dead; it would be so gross a lie. To say I have no sin, why there is not one part of my whole nature but what would protest against such an assertion! I have to come to God as a sinner, I cannot help it. And I would to God that everyone in this place felt they had to, too, for it is the intent and design of the law to convict the sinner in order that he may be compelled to accept salvation on free grace terms through Jesus Christ. You can never catch a fish in a net while there is one mesh through which he can escape, but when all the meshes are so small that the fish cannot get out, then we have taken him. When you are such a sinner that you cannot plead that you have no sin, nor yet that you have not sinned, but are quite convicted to be saved by grace, then you are in Christ's net and He will lift you out—and the Fisher of Men shall have cause to rejoice.

Besides, beloved friends, suppose we have tried to appear before God what we are not, *God has not been deceived*, for He is not mocked. We may set up a very respectable character to please ourselves and give it a few touches every now and then, just to set it off and improve it. And we may even find a number of people to join with us to form a mutual admiration society and our friends may cheerfully hear us talk about what wonderful beings we are, provided we will sit and hear them glorify themselves in return—but neither with one witness nor a thousand witnesses will our boasts be one jot more true, or likely to be believed in heaven. God is not misled. He looks at all boasters of their own purity and says, "When you say you have no sin, you make Me a liar, and My word is not in you, for if the truth were in you, you would know that sin is in you. And if My word were in you, you would also confess that you have sinned and humble yourselves before Me."

I exhort you, sinner, to give up all your attempts to feel right and to be right before coming to God in Christ Jesus. Have you not made a great failure of it already? You thought you were getting right for Christ, but just then you fell in the worst possible way. You have been trying to repair your old clothes and make yourself respectable before coming to Christ, but every time you have touched the garment the tear has grown worse. Give up all attempts to prepare for grace and come to Jesus Christ just as you are. When you have been trying to make yourself feel that you are right and proper for Christ, you have been sinning against God, for you have been flying in the teeth of His witness, which is that Jesus Christ came, not to save the righteous, but sinners. In proportion as you try to make yourself out to be righteous, you have denied the testimony of God. May the Spirit of God help you to come to your heavenly

Father on the ground of truth, confessing that you have sinned—that is the truth for you, and on the ground that Christ died for sinners—that is the truth on God's side which enables Him to smile on sinners.

Now, what is your state this morning? Are you cold as an iceberg as to divine things? Come and tell the Lord you are an iceberg and let Him thaw you. What is your state—hard as a rock, or like a nether millstone? Is there no feeling? Come and tell the Lord that you do not feel. Oh, is there no trace of any good feeling in you? Come to my Lord without a trace of feeling and tell Him just what you are. And oh, if you can dare to say, over the head of all your sin and sinfulness, "Nevertheless, I rest myself on the blood that cleanses from all sin and I beseech You, O Lord, seeing I confess my sin, to cleanse me from all unrighteousness," you will find Him faithful and just to do it. Come as the citizens of Calais did to King Edward III when the city was captured—come with ropes about your neck, admitting that if sentence were executed upon you, you deserve it. Come at once in all your filthiness and nakedness—come with no jewels in your ears, with no ornaments upon your necks, and with no recommendation whatever—come as sinners by nature and as sinners by practice. Plead nothing that looks like goodness, but come in your sin. Do not try to put one touch of paint on those cheeks of yours, nor imitate the flush of health upon that consumptive countenance. Come as you are and say, "Lord, look at me as I am, a worse sinner than even I think myself to be, and then show the infinity of Your free grace, and the power of Jesus' dying love in saving me, even me." Ah, my brethren, you will not be long without peace if you draw near to God in that fashion. Fling away any preparations, fitness, commendations, and hopefulness, and take my Lord Jesus, as empty-handed sinners take Him. Meet Him just as He is and just as you are. God will deal with you truthfully. He will never cast away a sinner that comes to Him according to truth. For my own part, I mean to come to Him as a sinner always. I know I am saved, but I never hope to get one inch beyond that verse—"The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanses me from all sin," for only so can I walk in the light as He is in the light.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 JOHN 1, 2:1-11.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—176, 51, 551.

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ABRAHAM'S PROMPT OBEDIENCE TO THE CALL OF GOD
NO. 1242

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 27, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he would receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went."
Hebrews 11:8.

ONE is struck with the practical character of this verse. Abraham was called and he obeyed. There is no hint of hesitation, parleying, or delay—when he was called to go out, he went out. Would to God that such conduct were usual, yes, universal, for with many of our fellow men, and I fear with some now present, the call alone is not enough to produce obedience. "Many are called, but few are chosen." The Lord's complaint is, "I called and you refused." Such calls come again and again to many, but they turn a deaf ear to them. They are hearers only and not doers of the Word of God. And, worse still, some are of the same generation as that which Zechariah spoke of when he said, "They pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears that they should not hear." Even among the most attentive hearers, there are many to whom the Word comes with small practical result in actual obedience. Here we are in midsummer again, and yet Felix has not found his convenient season. It was about midwinter when he said he should find one, but the chosen day has not arrived. The mother of Sisera thought he was long in coming, but what shall we say of this loitering season? We can see that the procrastinator waits, but it is hard to guess how long he will do so. Like the man who waited to cross the river until all the water was gone, he waits till all difficulties are removed and he is not one whit nearer that imaginary period than he was years ago. Meanwhile, the delayer's case waxes worse and worse and if there were difficulties before, they are now far more numerous and severe. The man who waits until he finds it more easy to bear the yoke of obedience is like the woodman who found his load too heavy for his idle shoulder, and placing it upon the ground, gathered more wood and added to the bundle, then tried it. But finding it still an unpleasant load, repeated the experiment of heaping on more in the vain hope that by-and-by it might be of a more suitable shape for his shoulder. How foolish to go on adding sin on sin, increasing the hardness of the heart, increasing the distance between the soul and Christ—and all the while fondly dreaming of some enchanted hour in which it will be more easy to yield to the divine call and part with sin. Is it always going to be so? There are a few weeks and then comes harvest, will another harvest leave you

where you are, and will you again have to say, "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved"? Shall God's long-suffering mercy only afford you opportunities for multiplying transgressions? Will you always resist His Spirit? Will you always put Him off with promises to be redeemed tomorrow? Shall the tenderness and mercy of God be thus despised forever and forever? Our prayer is that God, of His grace, may give you to imitate the example of Abraham, who when he was called obeyed at once.

The sad point about the refusals to obey the call of the gospel is that men are losing a golden opportunity—an opportunity for being numbered among the choice spirits of the world—among those who shall be blessed among men and women. Abraham had an opportunity and he had grace to grasp it. At this day, there is not on the register of our race a nobler name than that of "the father of the faithful." He obtained a supreme grandeur of rank among the truly great and good. He is far higher in the esteem of the right-minded than the conqueror blood-red from battle or the emperor robed in purple. Abraham was an imperial man, head and shoulders above his fellows. His heart was in heaven. The light of God bathed his forehead and his soul was filled with divine influences, so that he saw the day of the Lord Jesus and was glad. He was blessed of the Lord that made heaven and earth, and was made a blessing to all nations. Some of you will never gain such honor. You will live and die ignoble because you trifle with supreme calls, and yet did you believe in God, did you but live by faith, there would be before you, also, a course of immortal honor which would lead you to eternal glory. Instead, however, choosing the way of unbelief, neglect, and delay, you will, I fear, one day awake to shame and to everlasting contempt. And then you will know, to your eternal confusion, how bright a crown you have lost. I am in hopes that there are some among you who would not be losers of the crown of life—who desire, in fact, above all things, to obtain the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus and to them I shall speak. And while I speak, may the Holy Spirit cause every word to fall with power.

To help them, we shall consider, first, *what was Abraham's special experience which led to his being what he became?* And, secondly, *what was there peculiar in Abraham's conduct?* And then, thirdly, *what was the result of that conduct?*

I. WHAT WAS ABRAHAM'S SPECIAL EXPERIENCE which led to his becoming so remarkable a saint? The secret lies in three things—he had a call, he obeyed it, and he obeyed it because he had faith.

First, then, *he had a call.* How that call came, we are not told. Whether it reached him through a dream, or by an audible voice from heaven, or by some unmentioned prophet, we cannot tell. Most probably he heard a voice from heaven speaking audibly to him and saying, "Get you out from your kindred and from your father's house." We, too, have had many calls, but perhaps we have said, "If I heard a voice speaking from the sky I would obey it." But the form in which your call has come has been better than that, for Peter, in his second epistle, tells us that he himself heard a voice out of the excellent glory when he was with our Lord on the

holy mountain. But he adds, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy," as if the testimony which is written—the light that shines in a dark place which beams forth from the Word of God—was more sure than even the voice which he heard from heaven. I will show you that it is so, for if I should hear a voice, how am I to know that it is divine? Might it not, even if it were divine, be suggested to me for many reasons that I was mistaken? That it was most unlikely that God should speak to a man at all, and more unlikely still that He should speak to me? Might not a hundred difficulties and doubts be suggested to lead me to question whether God had spoken to me at all? But most of you believe the Bible to be inspired by the Spirit of God and to be the voice of God. Now, in this book you have the call—"Come you out from among them, be you separate, touch not the unclean thing; and I will be a Father unto you and you shall be My sons and daughters." Do not say that you would accept that call if it were spoken with a voice rather than written—you know that it is not so in daily life. If a man receives a written letter from his father or a friend, does he attach less importance to it than he would have done to a spoken communication? By no means! I reckon that many of you in business are quite content to get written orders for goods. And when you get them, you do not require a purchaser to ask you in person—you would just as soon that he would not—in fact, you commonly say that you like to have it in black and white. Is it not so? Well, then, you have your wish—here is the call in black and white. I do but speak according to common sense when I say that if the Lord's call to you is written in the Bible, and it certainly is, you do not speak the truth when you say, "I would listen to it if it were spoken, but I cannot listen to it because it is written." The call, as given by the book of inspiration, ought to have over your minds a masterly power, and if your hearts were right before God, the Word spoken in the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit would be at once obeyed.

Moreover, my undecided hearers, you have had other calls beside those from the Book. There have been calls through the living ministry, when the minister has spoken as pointedly to you as if he were a prophet, and you have known that the Lord spoke by him, for he has depicted your circumstances, described your condition, and the Word has come to you, and you have, with astonishment, admitted that it found you out. The message has also been spoken to you by a mother's tender love and by a father's earnest advice. You have had the call too in the form of sickness and trouble. In the silence of the night, when you could not sleep, your conscience has demanded to be heard—the inward strivings of the Holy Spirit have been with you and loud have been the knocks at your door. Who among us has not known this? But, alas, the Lord has called and has been refused. He has stretched out His hands and has not been regarded. Is it not so with many of you? You have not been like Samuel who said, "Here am I, for You did call me," but like the adder which shuts her ears to the voice of the charmer. This is not to be done without incurring great guilt and involving the offender in heavy punishment.

Abraham had a call, so have we, but here was the difference, *Abraham obeyed*. Well does Paul say, "They have not all obeyed the gospel," for to many the call comes as a common call, and the common call falls on sealed ears. But to Abraham and to those who by grace have become the children of faithful Abraham, to whom are the blessings of grace, and with whom God has entered into league and covenant, to such it comes as a special call—a call attended with a sacred power which subdues their wills and secures their obedience. Abraham was prepared for instant obedience to any command from God—his journey was appointed and he went. He was bid to leave his country and he left it. He was told to leave his friends and he left them all. Gathering together such substance as he had, he exiled himself that he might be a sojourner with his God. He took a journey in an age when traveling was infinitely more laborious than now. He knew not the road that he had to take, nor the place to which his journey would conduct him—it was enough for him that the Lord had given him the summons. Like a good soldier, he obeyed his marching orders, asking no questions. Towards God, a blind obedience is the truest wisdom and Abraham felt so, and therefore, followed the path that God marked out for him from day to day, feeling that sufficient for the day would be God's guidance. Thus Abraham obeyed!

Alas, there are some here present, some too to whom we have preached now for years, who have not obeyed. Oh sirs, some of you do not require more knowledge—you need far more than that to put in practice what you already know. Would you wonder if I should grow weary of telling some of you the way of salvation any longer? Do you not, yourselves, weary of persuading those who will not yield? So far as I have reason to fear that my task is hopeless, it becomes a heavy one. Again, and again, and again have I explained the demands of the gospel—and described the blessings of it—and yet I see its demands neglected and its blessings refused. Ah, sirs, there will be an end to this before long, one way or the other, which shall it be? O that you were wise and would yield obedience to the truth. The gospel has about it a divine authority and is not to be trifled with. Notwithstanding that grace is its main characteristic even though it has all the authority of a command. Do we not read of those who "stumbled at the Word, being disobedient"? Surely there must be a command and a duty, or else there could not be disobedience. It is awful work when, through disobedience to the command of the gospel, it becomes a savor of death unto death instead of life unto life. And instead of a cornerstone, it becomes a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. Remember, upon whomever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. Christ Himself has said it and so it must be. O Lord, in Your infinite mercy, give us willing and obedient minds that we may not pervert Your gospel to our own destruction.

But I reminded you that the main point concerning Abraham was this, *he obeyed the call because he believed God*. Faith was the secret reason of his obedience. We read of certain persons that, "The Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." And again we read that, "Some, when they had heard, did provoke." But

in Abraham's case, there was neither misbelief nor provocation, he believed God with a childlike faith. His faith, I suppose, lay in the following items—when the Lord spoke, he believed that it was the living God who addressed him. Believing that God spoke, he judged Him worthy of his earnest heed and he felt that it was imperative upon him to do as he was bid. This settled, he desired nothing more to influence his course—he felt that the will of God must be right and that his highest wisdom was to yield to it. Though he did not know where he was to go, he was certain that his God knew, and though he could hardly comprehend the reward promised to him, he was sure that the bounteous God never mocked His servants with deceitful gifts. He did not know the land of Canaan, but he was sure if it was a country chosen by God as a peculiar gift to His called servant, it must be no ordinary land. He left all such matters with his heavenly Friend, being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able to perform.

What a mighty sway faith has over a man and how greatly it strengthens him. Faith was to the patriarch his authority for starting upon his strange journey, an authority which enabled him to defy alike, the worldly wisdom which advises and the worldly folly which scoffs. Perhaps they said to him, "Why will you leave your kinsfolk, Abraham?" But he replied, "God bids me." That was for him a sufficient reason. He needed no further argument. This also became to him the guide of his steps. If any said, "But, strange old man, how can you journey when you know not the way?" He replied, "I go where the Lord bids me." Faith found in God chart, compass, and pole star, all in one. The Word of the Lord also became the nourishment for his journey. If any said, "How will you be supplied, Abraham, in those wild lands? Where will you find your daily bread?" He replied, "God bids me go—it is not possible that He should desert me. He can spread a table in the wilderness, or make me live upon the Word which comes out of His mouth, if bread should fail." Probably these suggestions of trial may never have occurred to Abraham, but if they did, his faith swept them aside from his path as so many cobwebs. Perhaps some even dared to say, "But where are you going? There is no such country, it is an enthusiast's dream—a land which flows with milk and honey. Where will you find it? Oh, graybeard, you are in your dotage, 75 years have bewildered you." But he replied, "I shall find it, for the Lord has given it to me and leads me to it." He believed God and took firm hold, and therefore, he endured as seeing Him that is invisible.

See, then, dear friends, what *we* must have if we are to be numbered with the seed of Abraham—we must have faith in God and a consequent obedience to His commands. Have we obtained these gifts of the Spirit? I hope that many of us have the living faith which walks by love and if so, we shall rejoice in the will of the Lord, let it be what it may. If we know anything to be right, we shall delight to do it. But as for doubtful or sinful deeds, we renounce them. For us, from now on, our leader is the Lord alone. But is it so with all of you? Let the personal question go round and cause great searching of heart, for I fear that in many instances precious faith is absent. Many have heard, but they have not believed. The sound

of the gospel has entered into their ears, but its inner sense and sacred power have not been felt in their hearts. Remember, that "without faith it is impossible to please God," so that you are displeasing to the Lord. How long shall it be so? How long shall unbelief lodge within you and grieve the Holy Spirit? May the Lord convince you, yes, at this moment may He lead you to decision and enable you, from now on, to live by faith. It may be now or never with you. God grant it may be *now!*

II. This brings me to the second part of our subject, WHAT WAS THERE PECULIAR IN ABRAHAM'S CONDUCT? Whatever was essential in his conduct, there must be the same in us if we are to be true children of the father of the faithful. The points of peculiarity in Abraham's case seem to me to have been five.

The first was this, *that he was willing to be separated from his kindred.* It is a hard task to a man of loving soul to put long leagues of distance between himself and those he loves, or to become a banished man. Yet in order to salvation, brethren, we must be separated from this untoward generation. Not that we have to take our journey into a far country, or to forsake our kindred—perhaps it would be an easier task to walk with God if we could do so—but our calling is to be separate from sinners and yet to live among them. We are to be a stranger and a pilgrim in their cities and homes. We must be separate in character from those with whom we may be called to grind at the same mill or sleep in the same bed. And this, I guarantee you, is by no means an easier task than that which fell to the patriarch's lot. If believers could form a secluded settlement where no tempters could intrude, they would, perhaps, find the separated life far more easy, though I am not very sure about it, for all experiments in that direction have failed. There is, however, for us no "garden walled around," no, "island of saints," no Utopia. We sojourn among those whose ungodly lives cause us frequent grief and the Lord Jesus meant it to be so, for He said, "Behold I send you forth as sheep among wolves."

Come, now, my hearer, are you willing to be one of the separated? I mean this—will you dare to begin to think for yourself? You have let your grandmother's religion come to you with the old arm chair and the antique china, as heirlooms of the family, and you go to a certain place of worship because your family have always attended there. You have a sort of hereditary religion in the same way you have a display of family pottery—pretty battered it is, no doubt, and rather light in weight by this time—but still you cling to it. Now, young man, dare you think for yourself? Or do you put out your thinking to be done for you like your washing? I believe it to be one of the essentials of a Christian man that he should have the courage to use his own mental faculties and search the Bible for himself. God has not committed our religious life to the guidance of the brain in our neighbor's head, but He has bestowed on each of us a conscience and an understanding which He expects us to use. Do your own thinking, my friend, on such a business as this.

Now, if the grace of God helps you rightly to think for yourself, you will judge very differently from your ungodly friends. Your views and theirs will differ, your motives will differ, the objects of your pursuit will differ.

There are some things which are quite customary with them which you will not endure. You will soon become a speckled bird among them. The Jews, in all time, have been very different from all other nations, and although other races have become permanently united, the Jewish people have always been a family by themselves. Though now residing in the midst of all nations, it is still true, "The people shall dwell alone; they shall not be reckoned among the nations." In all the cities of Europe, there are places of the "Jews' quarter," and we in London had our, "Old Jewry," the Jews being evermore a peculiar people. We Christians are to be equally distinct, not in meats, drinks, garments, and holy days, but as to spirituality of mind and holiness of life. We are to be strangers and foreigners in the land in which we sojourn. We are not resident traders in this Vanity Fair—we pass through it because it lies on our way home—but we are ill at ease in it. In no tent of all the fair can we rest. O traders in this hubbub of trifles, we have small esteem for your great bargains and tempting cheats. We are not buyers in the Roman row nor in the French row—we would give all that we have to leave your polluted streets and be no more annoyed by Beelzebub, the lord of the fair. Our journey is towards the Celestial City and when the sons of earth cry to us, "What do you buy?" we answer, "We buy the truth." O young man, can you take up in the warehouse the position of being a Christian, though there is no other believer in the house? Come, good woman, dare you serve the Lord, though husband and children ridicule you? Man of business, dare you do the right thing in business and play the Christian, though around you the various methods of trading render it hard for you to be unflinchingly honest? This singularity is demanded of every believer in Jesus. You cannot be blessed with Abraham unless, like he, you come out and stand forth as true men—

"Dare to be a Daniel
Dare to stand alone.
Dare to have a purpose true,
Dare to make it known."

May God grant to us grace to be Daniels, even if the lions' den should threaten us.

A second peculiarity of Abraham's conduct is seen in the fact that *he was ready for all the losses and risks that might be involved in obedience to the call of God*. He was to leave his native country, as we have already said. To some of us that would be a hard task and I doubt not it was such to him. The smoke out of my own chimney is better than the fire on another man's hearth. There is no place like home wherever we may wander. The home feeling was probably as sure in Abraham as in us, but he was never to have a home on earth any more, except that he was to realize what Moses afterwards sung, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." For him there was no homestead and paternal estate. He owned no portion of the land in which he sojourned. His sole abiding place was a frail tent, which he removed from day to day as his flocks required fresh pasture. He could say to his God, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with You." He had to leave those whom he loved, for though they accompanied him part of the way, they would not go further.

If he followed the Lord fully, he must go alone. The patriarch knew nothing of half measures, he went through with his obedience, and left all his kindred to go to Canaan, to which he had been summoned. Those who wished to stop at Haran might stop there. Canaan was his destination and he could not stop short of it. No doubt he had many risks to encounter on his journey and when he entered the country. The Canaanite was still in the land, and they were a fierce and cruel set of heathen, who would have utterly destroyed the wanderer if the Lord had not put a spell upon them, and said, "Touch not My anointed, and do my prophets no harm." It was a country swarming with little tribes who were continually at war. Abraham himself was, for Lot's sake, to gird on his sword and go forth to fight, lover of peace as he was. Of all discomforts and dangers, loss of property, and parting with friends, Abraham made small account. God commanded and Abraham went.

Now, brethren, can you and I do the same? Oh, you who desire to be saved, I say, can you do this? Have you counted the cost and determined to pay it? You must not expect that you will wear silver slippers and walk on green rolled turf all the way to heaven. The road was rough which your Lord traversed and if you walk with Him, yours will be rough, too. Can you bear, for Jesus' sake, all earthly loss? Can you bear the scoff, the cold shoulder, the cutting jest, the innuendo, the sarcasm, the sneer? Could you go further and bear loss of property and suffering in purse? Do not say that it may not occur, for many believers lose all by having to leave the ill pursuits by which they once earned their bread. You must, in your intention, give all up *for* Jesus, and in act you must give up all *to* Jesus. If He is yours, you must, from now on, have all things in common with Him. You must be joint heirs together, His, yours and yours, His. You may be well content to make joint stock when you have so little and He has so much. Oh, can you stand to it and give up all for Him? Well, if you cannot, do not pretend to do it. Yet, unless you take up your cross, you cannot be His disciples. Unless you can give up everything for Him, do not pretend to follow Him. Listen to this. If you think heaven worth nothing and Christ worth nothing, if you consider worldly gain to be everything, and comfort everything, and honor everything, if you could not die a martyr's death for Christ, your love to Him is not worth much, and the Abraham spirit is not in you. May God enable us to take our places in the battle in the front of the foe, where the fight is most furious. May grace make us sing—

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee,
Destitute, despised, forsaken,
You, from hence, my all shall be."

If that is said in truth, it is well, my brethren. You are fair to be in all things a partaker with faithful Abraham. You also shall find much blessing in the separated life.

Thirdly, one great peculiarity in Abraham was that *he waived the present for the future*. He went out to go into a place which he should *after* receive for an inheritance. He left the inheritance he then had to receive one which was yet to come. This is not the way of the world. The proverb

says, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," and especially in such a bush as Abraham saw before him. It did not seem very likely he would ever obtain that land—but still he let his bird in the hand go and took to the bird in the bush, being fully persuaded that he should have it in God's good time. Mr. Bunyan sets this forth in his picture of two children, Passion and Patience. Passion would have all his good things now and he sat among his toys and joys, and laughed and rejoiced. Patience had to bear to see his brother Passion full of mirth and to hear his scoffing. But then, as Master Bunyan beautifully says, Patience came in last for his portion, and it lasted forever, for there is nothing after the last. So, then, if we are to have our heaven last, it will last, and no cloud shall mar it, no calamity bring it to an end. He is the wise man who lets go of the shadow to grasp the substance, even though he should have to wait 20, 30, or 40 years for it. He is blessed who leaves earth's wind and bubble and feeds on more substantial meat. God grant us grace to live more for the future than we have been accustomed to do.

Oh you ungodly ones, you do not care about the future, for you have never realized death and judgement. You are afraid to look over the edge of this narrow life. As to death, nothing frightens you so much. As for hell, if you are warned to escape from it, instead of thanking the preacher for being honest enough to warn you of it, you straightway call him a, "hell-fire" preacher, or give him some other ugly name. Alas, you little know how pained he is to speak to you on so terrible a subject! You little dream how true a lover of your soul he is, or he would not warn you of the wrath to come. Do you want to have flatterers about you? Such are to be had in plenty if you desire them. As for heaven, you seem to have no regard for it. At any rate, you are not making your title to it sure or clear by caring about divine things. If you would have the birthright, you must let the present mess of pottage go. The eternal future must come before the fleeting trifles of today. You must let the things which are seen sink and bid the "things not seen as yet" rise in all their matchless grandeur and reality before your eyes. You must give up chasing butterflies and shadows, and pursue eternal things. My immortal soul pines only for immortal joys. I leave my present lot to be appointed of the Lord as He wills, so long as He will shed His love abroad in my heart. We must be prepared for eternity, and for that purpose we should concentrate our faculties upon divine truth and personal religion, that we may be ready to meet our God. This, then, was the third excellence in Abraham's walk, that he waived present comfort for the sake of the future blessing.

Fourthly, and this is the main point, *Abraham committed himself to God by faith.*

From that day forward, Abraham had nothing but his God for a portion, nothing but his God for a protector. No squadron of soldiers accompanied the good man's march. His safeguard lay in Him who had said, "Fear not, Abraham, I am your shield and your exceedingly great reward." He had to trust the Lord for his daily bread and daily guidance, for he was to march on and not know half a mile before him. He was ignorant when to stop and when to journey on, except as the Lord God

guided him hour by hour. I must not say that Abraham became a poor pensioner upon the daily provision of God, but I will use a better term and describe him as "a gentleman commoner upon the royal bounty of his heavenly King." His lot was to have nothing but to be heir of heaven and earth. Can you walk, thus, by faith? Has the grace of God brought you who have been hesitating, to resolve, from now on, to believe God and trust Him? If He has, you are saved, for faith is the deciding matter. To realize the existence of God and to trust in Him, especially to trust in His mercy, through Jesus Christ, is the essential matter. As for the life and walk of faith, they are the most singular things in the world. I seem, myself, to have been climbing a series of mysterious staircases, light as air and yet as solid as granite. I cannot see a single step before me and often there seems to the eye to be nothing whatever to form a foothold for the next step. I look down and wonder how I came where I am, but still I climb on, and He who has brought me so far supplies me with confidence for that which lies before me. High into things invisible the ethereal ladder has borne me and onward and forward to glory its rounds will yet conduct me. What I have seen has often failed me, but what I have not seen, and yet have believed, has always held me stably. Have not you found it so, all you children of God? Let us pray that the Lord may lead others to tread the same mystic ascent by beginning, today, the life of faith.

The last specialty in Abraham's procedure was *what he did was done at once*. There were no, "ifs," no debating, no considering and delays. He needed no forcing and driving—

"God drew him and he followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine."

At once, I say, he went. Promptness is one of the brightest excellencies in faith's acts. Delay spoils all. Someone asked Alexander to what he owed his conquests, and he said, "I have conquered because I never delayed." While the enemy was preparing, he had begun the battle—and they were routed before they knew where they were. After that fashion faith overcomes temptation. She runs in the way of obedience, or rather she mounts on the wings of eagles and so speeds on her way. With regard to the things of God, our first thoughts are best—considerations of difficulty entangle us. Whenever you feel a prompting to do a good thing, do not ask anybody whether you should do it or not—no one ever repents of doing good. Ask your friends afterwards, rather than beforehand, for it is ill consulting with flesh and blood when duty is plain. If the Lord has given you substance and you are prompted to be generous to the cause of God, do not count every sixpence over and calculate what others would give—count it after you have given it, if it must be counted at all. But it would be better, still, not to let your left hand know what your right hand does. It cannot be wrong to do the right thing at once. No, in matters of duty, every moment of delay is a sin. Thus we have Abraham before us. May the Holy Spirit make us like he.

Now, this morning, who will listen to the call of God? Who, like Abraham, will quit the world, with all its folly, and resolve, from now on, to be

upon the Lord's side? Oh, Spirit of the living God, cause many a hidden Abraham to come forth!

III. We have to close with two or three words about what was THE RESULT OF ABRAHAM'S ACTION. The question of many will be, *did it pay*? That is the inquiry of most people and within proper bounds it is not a wrong question. Did it answer Abraham's purpose? Our reply is, it did so gloriously. True, it brought him into a world of trouble and no wonder—such a noble course as his was not likely to be an easy one. What grand life ever was easy? Who wants to be a child and do easy things? Yet we read in Abraham's life, after a whole host of troubles, "And Abraham was old and well stricken in years, and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." That is a splendid conclusion—God had blessed Abraham in all things. Whatever happened, he had always been under the divine smile and all things had worked for his good. He was parted from his friends, but he had the sweet society of his God and was treated as the friend of the Most High. He was allowed to intercede for others and clothed with great power on their behalf. I almost envy Abraham. I should do so altogether if I did not know that all saints are permitted to enjoy the same privileges. What a glorious degree Abraham took when he was called "the friend of God". Was not his loss of earthly friendships abundantly made up to him? What honor also the patriarch had among his contemporaries. He was a great man and held in high esteem. How splendidly he bore himself—no king ever behaved more royally. That quibbling king of Sodom wanted to make a bargain with him, but the grand old man replied, "I will not take from a thread even to a shoelace, lest you should say, 'I have made Abraham rich.'" Those sons of Heth also were willing to make him a present of a piece of land around the cave of Machpelah, but he did not want a present from Canaanites and so he said, "No, I will pay you every penny. I will weigh out the price to you, whatever you may demand." In noble independence, no man could excel the father of the faithful. His contemporaries look small before him and no man seems to be his equal, save Melchizedek. His image passes across the page of history rather like that of a spirit from the supernal realms than that of a mere man—he is so thorough, so childlike and therefore so heroic. He lived in God and on God and with God. Such a sublime life recompensed a thousand-fold all the sacrifice he was led to make.

Was not his life a happy one? One might wisely say, "Let my life be like that of Abraham." As to temporal things, the Lord enriched him, and in spiritual things, he was richer still. He was wealthier in heart than in substance, though great even in that respect. And now Abraham is the father of the faithful, patriarch of the whole family of believers, and to him alone of all mortal men God said, "In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed." This very day, through his matchless seed, to whom be glory forever and ever, even Jesus Christ of the seed of Abraham, all tribes of men are blessed. His life was, both for time and for eternity, a great success—both for temporals and for spirituals, the path of faith was the best that he could have followed.

And now may we all be led to imitate his example. If we never have done so, may we, this morning, be led to give God His due by trusting Him, to give the blood of Christ its due by relying upon it, to give the Spirit of God His due by yielding ourselves to Him. Will you do so or not? I pause for your reply. The call is given again—will you obey it or not? Nobody here will actually declare that he will not, but many will reply that *they hope they shall*. Alas! My sermon is a failure to those who so speak. If that is your answer, I am foiled again. When Napoleon was attacking the Egyptians, he had powerful artillery, but he could not reach the enemy, for they were in a mud fort. It made Napoleon very angry, because if they had been behind granite walls, he could have battered them down, but their earthworks could not be blown to pieces, every ball stuck in the mud and made the wall stronger. Your hopes and delays are just such a mud wall. I would a good deal sooner have people say, "There now, we do not believe in God nor in His Christ," and speak out straightforwardly, than go on forever behind this mud wall of, "We will by-and-by," and "We hope it will be so one day." The fact is you do not mean to obey the Lord at all. You are deceiving yourselves if you think so. If God is God tomorrow, He is God today. If Christ is worth having next week, He is worth having today. If there is anything in religion at all, it demands a present surrender to its claims and a present obedience to its laws. But if you judge it to be a lie, say so, and we shall know where you are. If Baal is God, serve him. But if God is God, I charge you by Jesus Christ, fly to Him as He is revealed—come forth from the sin of the world and be separate—and walk by faith in God. To this end may the Spirit of God enable you. Amen and amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Hebrews 11:1 to 13; Genesis 11:27 to end; 12:1 to 9.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—174, 655, 658.

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RIVERS OF WATER IN A DRY PLACE
NO. 1243

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 11, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"As rivers of water in a dry place."
Isaiah 32:2.

I SUPPOSE it must be conceded that the surface sense of this passage refers to Hezekiah and to other good kings who were the means of great blessings to the declining kingdom of Judah. We can scarcely be thankful enough for a righteous government. If, for a few years, we could feel the yoke of despotism, we should better appreciate the joys of freedom. In the prophecy before us, very much is said in praise of a king who shall reign in righteousness and princes who shall rule in judgment. Such men are the protectors of the State, enriching it by commerce and blessing it with peace. They deserve honor and the Word of God renders it to them. But I cannot bring my mind to believe that these expressions were intended by the Holy Spirit to have no other and higher reference. They appear to me to be far too full of meaning to be primarily or solely intended for Hezekiah or any other mere man. When the Holy Spirit declared, by the mouth of the prophet, "A man shall be as a hiding place from the wind and a cover from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of great rock in a weary land," it can scarcely be conceived that he referred only to Hezekiah and his princes. It cannot be that the church of God has erred these many years in not applying such a passage as this to the Lord Jesus Christ. Surely the words are not only applicable to Him, but can never be fully understood until they are applied to His ever blessed and adorable person. At any rate, this much is sure, that if a king who rules in righteousness brings so much blessing on his people, then Jesus, who is peculiarly the King of righteousness, "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords," must bring these blessings in the highest conceivable degree and therefore, these expressions are, beyond all possibility of exaggeration, applicable in their widest sense to Him, whom this day we delight to hail as Lord of All.

Applying the language of the whole verse to the Lord Jesus Christ, the King in Zion, we are struck with the number of the metaphors. He is not merely a hiding place and a covert and a river, but He is a shadow of a great rock. Yes, my brethren, if we attempt to set forth our Lord's glories by earthly analogies, we shall need a host of them, for no one can set Him forth to perfection. Each one has some deficiency, and even all to-

gether, they are insufficient to display His loveliness. We need a thousand types and images to depict the varied beauties of His character, the manifold excellencies of His offices, the merit of His suffering, the glory of His triumphs, and the innumerable blessings which He bestows on the sons of men. Should you focus all the rays of nature's sun, you could not equal a solitary beam of His splendor—

"Nor earth, nor sea, nor sun, nor stars,
Nor heaven His full resemblance bears;
His beauties you can never trace
Till you behold Him face to face."

It is very pleasant to see that our Beloved is such a many-sided Christ. From all points of view He is admirable and He is supremely precious in so many different ways—for we have so many and so varied needs and our circumstances are so continually changing—and the incessant cravings of our spirit are so constantly taking fresh turns. Blessed be His name, these changes of ours, and needs of ours, and cravings of ours shall only put us in fresh positions in which to see more fully His surpassing excellencies, His superlative fullness, and how completely He is adapted to meet the needs of our nature in every conceivable condition. Blessed be the name of the Lord Jesus that while He is one, He is many. While He is altogether lovely, He is also lovelinesses combined. While He is perfect under one aspect, He is equally complete under every other.

The point to note in the text, applying it to Christ, is this that it is *a man* who is to be as rivers of water in a dry place. Note that—*a man*! We glory in the Godhead of Jesus Christ—about that we entertain no question. This is not the place in which to attempt to prove it, for we are all persuaded of it, and we know Him to be divine by personal dealings with Him. We have found Him to be the Son of the Highest and He ever must be so to us—"Very God of very God." Yet, none the less but all the more, do we tenaciously hold to the truth of the true and proper manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is as God in human flesh that He is to us as rivers of water in a dry place. Think of it for a minute. If God loves us so much as to become man, then the blessings which He intends to bestow must be incalculable. The Incarnation is in itself a promise big with untold blessing. Gaze upon the Son of God in Bethlehem's manger and you feel sure that, if the Infinite has assumed the form of an infant, His incarnation betokens infinite love, foreshadows intimate communion, and foretells unbounded blessedness for the sons of Adam. If Jehovah, Himself, in human flesh walks over the acres of Judea, if He bears human sicknesses and sorrows, if He, in human form, gives His hands to the nails and His heart to the spear, there must be boundless affection in His heart towards the seed chosen from among men. What rivers of blessings must come to us if God Himself comes to us and comes in such a fashion and in such a spirit? What does the union of Godhead with humanity mean but this, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor? And what can His purpose be but "that we, through His

poverty, might be made rich"? rich with riches as vast as those which He renounced in order to espouse our nature in all its poverty and degradation. Let us, at this time, joy and rejoice in the Son of Mary, the Son of Man, who is also the Son of God. Let us exult today as we believe that Jesus is as truly man as He is truly God—

"Oh joy! There sits in our flesh,
Upon a throne of lights
One of a human mother born,
In perfect Godhead bright!"

This is the source, the channel and the stream, bringing to us and containing within itself all the blessings with which God has enriched us. This is that river of God which is full of water.

Let us come, then, with this as our guide, to *study the metaphor of our text*. When we have done so for a little, we shall *remark upon a special excellence which is indicated.* And having so done, we shall *close by gathering up the practical lessons of the whole*.

I. As setting forth the benedictions which come to us through the incarnate God, LET US STUDY THE METAPHOR of rivers of water in a dry place. This means, first, *great excellence* of blessing. A river is the fit emblem of very great benefits, for it is of the utmost value to the land through which it flows. A river, in its own way, creates life wherever it flows—grass, reeds, and rushes are sure to spring up—and willows fringe the water courses. The water of the river fosters and nourishes the vegetation along its banks and sustains an infinite number of fish and creeping things. The silver stream lights up the landscape with its brightness. "The joyous and abounding river" is the theme of song and a song in itself. It is a glad sight to trace the winding line of silver light among green fields. Who can refuse to render thanks to the God who thus visits the earth and waters it? Now, what the river is to the land, that the Lord Jesus Christ is to us. He is the spring and source of spiritual life and where He comes, divine life springs up and flourishes like a tree by the rivers of water whose leaf never withers. The life which He bestows, He also nourishes, watering it every moment. Nourishing it, He makes it fruitful. Making it fruitful, He causes it to be fair to look upon and brings it to perfection. Vegetation owes much to the river which waters it. What were the meads without the streams? What were the saints without the Savior? What were the villages without their springs and brooks? What were believers without the covenant blessings which are given us in Christ Jesus?

The analogy is so very obvious that I need not pursue it. The place of broad rivers and streams is the place where plentiful good things are looked for and not in vain shall we look for good things in our Lord Jesus. He is that river the streams whereof make glad the city of God. Of Him it may be truly said that, "Everything that lives which moves, where ever the rivers shall come, shall live." Because the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, therefore, do rivers of mercy flow to many and we

who believe shall be made to drink of the river of His pleasures. Here, my heart, is reason for adoration. I need not see any difficulty in it. Having believed the testimony of the Lord, all difficulty has vanished. "The Word was God," and the Word was also "made flesh and dwelt among us," and through being made flesh and dwelling among us, He has opened rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys. God has come down to man that man may go up to God. God has veiled Himself in an infant's form that babes may learn His love. The Christ has grown in stature from childhood to manhood that we also may grow up into Him in all things. He has been perfect man that we also may come unto the fullness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus. Christ the man, the God, connects man with God—the river flows directly from the throne of God to the hearts of mortals and brings God Himself to us to fill us with all fullness. Observe the excellence of the Lord Jesus and meditate upon it.

The metaphor chiefly implies, in the second place, *abundance*. Jesus is as rivers of water because He is full of grace and truth. It would be a very difficult thing to calculate the body of water to be found in the Thames, but in rivers such as our American friends are favored with, it must be almost beyond the power of mind to conceive the mass of water that must come rolling down into the sea. Gallons and hogsheads seem quite ridiculous by the side of the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence. I always feel very fidgety when theologians begin making calculations about the Lord Jesus. There used to be a very strong contention about particular redemption and general redemption, and though I confess myself to be to the very backbone a believer in Calvinistic doctrine, I never felt at home in such discussions. It is one thing to believe in the doctrines of grace, but quite another thing to accept all the encrustations which have formed upon those doctrines, and also a very different matter to agree with the spirit which is apparent in some who profess to propagate the pure truth. I can have nothing to do with calculating the value of the atonement of Christ. I see clearly the specialty of the purpose and intent of Christ in presenting His expiatory sacrifice, but I cannot see a limit to its preciousness and I dare not enter into computations as to its value or possible efficacy. Appraisals and estimate of values are out of place here. Sirs, I would like to see you, with your slates and pencils, calculating the cubical contents of the Amazon. I would be pleased to see you sitting down and estimating the quantity of fluid in the Ganges, the Indus, and the Orinoco. But when you have done so and summed up all the rivers of this earth, I will tell you that your task was only fit for school boys, and that you are not at the beginning of that arithmetic which can sum up the fullness of Christ—for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. His merit, His power, His love, His grace surpass all knowledge and consequently, all estimate. Limits are not to be found, neither shore nor bottom are discoverable. Instead of coldly calculating, with a view to systematize our doctrines, let us joyfully sing with the poet of the sanctuary—

"Rivers of love and mercy here
In a rich ocean join;
Salvation in abundance flows,
Like floods of milk and wine."

All idea of stint or insufficiency is out of place in reference to the Lord Jesus. When any man inquires, "Is there enough merit in the Savior's death to make atonement for my sin?" The answer is, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." When any say, "Perhaps I may not taste His love and believe on His name," the reply is, "Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Oh, sirs, would you measure the air? Could you calculate the contents of the atmosphere which surrounds the globe? Yes, that might be done. Would you measure space? I suppose that also might be accomplished. Will you measure eternity? Will you calculate infinity? You must begin by problems like these before you can discover a sum to that abundant grace which comes to sinners through God in human flesh, who bore human sin and gave up His life, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.

Anything approaching to a narrow spirit is unseemly in connection with the merits of our Redeemer. Stinginess at an imperial banquet is not more out of place than an ungenerous spirit in a Christian. Our Lord does things upon such a royal scale that we ought to be of a kingly spirit also. Saint and bigot are a strange mixture—saint and miser cannot agree. I remember hearing of a man who used to go out preaching and happened to have a well upon his premises, to which his neighbors came more frequently than he liked. He, therefore, put up a notice that trespassers would be prosecuted. It was not at all surprising that a witty friend soon adorned the preacher's residence with a bill in prominent capitals bearing these words, *"Come to Jesus, but you must not take water out of my well."* In a great many other ways the same remark might be applied. Come to Jesus, but do not crowd me up in my pew. Come to Jesus, but do not ask me for a shilling. Certain people are very free with the gospel, for it costs them nothing—very free, indeed, with the tracts which are given them to distribute, but they hang back when the hungry need feeding or the naked need clothing. Do you think such churls any credit to the gospel? Yes, and are there not preachers who appear to be half afraid that some poor non-elect sinner may get into heaven by accident? Hear how they define, distinguish, and denounce. I confess I have no sympathy with those who would drive men back. Far rather would I draw them forward. When one once gets to know that Jesus is as rivers of water, a large-hearted loving spirit seems to spring up in the soul as a matter of course. The Holy Spirit enlarges the heart by revealing to us the glorious fullness of our Lord. I pray, my brethren, you may be all enlarged and that none of you may ever slander the Lord Jesus Christ by bearing a narrow, contracted testimony concerning Him. Never may you help to straiten other people's apprehensions of what the gospel is by depicting your Lord as if He were some cramped up straight-lined canal

with locks, pumps, and measured wharfs—for He is as rivers of water. There is, in Christ Jesus, such an abundance that if you come, O great sinner, there is enough mercy in Christ for you. Yes, if the teeming myriads of the human race should all come rushing to this river to drink, they could not drain it dry—no, it should seem all the fuller and the lands should be made all the gladder as the undiminished stream flowed on.

In a river, we see not only excellence and abundance, but *freshness*. A pool is the same thing over again and gradually it becomes a stagnant pond, breeding corrupt life and pestilential gases. A river is always the same, yet never the same. It is always in its place, yet always moving on. Filled to the brim with living water, even as in ages long gone by, and yet flowing fresh from the spring, it is an ancient novelty. We call our own beautiful river, "Father Thames," yet he wears no furrows on his brows, but leaps in all the freshness of youth. You shall live by the banks of a river for years and yet each morning its stream shall be as fresh as though its fountain had been unsealed but an hour ago when the birds began to awake the morning and the sun to sip the dew. Is it not so with our Lord Jesus Christ? Is He not evermore as bright and fresh as when first you met with Him? I remember when first I knew Him, and my soul was married to Him. I had a blessed honeymoon in dearest fellowship. That sweet communion is not over yet, no, it is deeper, nearer, more constant than ever. He is as good a Christ to me now as at first—I may not say that He is better, but I must confess that I know Him better. I love Him more fervently and prize Him more highly. If you serve a master 20 years, I should not wonder but what you know a lot about him by that time. Some of you have served the Lord Jesus these 40 years, and what do you think of Him? You have found out a lot about Him by this time and you may, without fear, tell all that you have discovered. Do not words fail you to express His excellence? All others become stale, but Jesus has the dew of His youth. These fine ribbons and bits of color which are attracting the people to certain Episcopal churches for a time will soon fade. They tell us that such-and-such a church is quite full because they have a fashionable choir, pretty processions, tasteful banners, and many other childish toys which turn their churches into dolls' houses. But let them not dream that these trinkets will draw the people for long. Go into the Popish churches on the continent and you will see, in some cases, fine marble and gems, and in others two-penny and halfpenny artificial flowers and daubs of paint—but where are the people? Rarely enough do you see a crowd. In general, you only spy out a few women, dupes of the priests. The manhood of the nation is not to be entrapped by such transparent tomfooleries. These things grow old and degenerate, but the gospel does not. Centuries ago, Wickliffe preached the gospel of Christ beneath an oak in Surrey and crowds assembled. Not long ago, I preached beneath the same old tree, the same gospel, and its attractive power was none the less. Even so, in the ages yet to come, others will

arise with the same message on their tongues and the people will gather to hear them, and discover the gospel's power. Some will come to find fault and will gnash their teeth with rage, but they *must* come and hear it. It is impossible for them to do otherwise, for the novelty of the gospel will always attract. Is it not always new? And is not a new thing ever sought after? Does a man need something new? Tell him "the old, old story." Our naked fathers crossed the Thames in their coracles and we sail upon it in our steamships. But it is the same glad river, and when it first flowed, it was not more fresh and sparkling than it is today. It is ever changing, ever fresh, ever new, yet ever the same. And so is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Again, Jesus Christ may well be compared to a river, from His *freeness*. We cannot say this of all the rivers on earth, for men generally manage to claim the banks and shores, the fisheries and water powers. I sometimes wonder why our great men do not map out the stars. Will no duke claim the Pole star, and no earl monopolize Castor and Pollex? Could we not have an Enclosure Act for the Zodiac, or at least for some of the brighter constellations? Well is it written, "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth has He given to the children of men." Yet rivers can scarcely be parceled out—they refuse to become private property. See how freely the creatures approach the banks. I enjoyed, the other day, watching cattle come to the river to drink. They sought out a sloping place and then stood knee deep in the stream and drank and drank again! I thought of Behemoth, who trusted he could snuff up Jordan at a draught. He drank so heartily, and no one said to him, "No," or measured out the draught. A dog, as he ran along, lapped eagerly and no tax was demanded of him. The swan was free to plunge her long neck into the flood, and the swallow to touch the surface with its wing. To ox and fly, and bird, and fish, and man, the river was alike free. So you, ox of a sinner, with your great thirst, come and drink. And you, dog of a sinner, who thinks yourself unworthy even of a drop of grace, yet come and drink. I read near one of our public ponds a notice, "Nobody is allowed to wash dogs here." That is right enough, for a pond, but it would be quite needless for a river. In a river, the foulest may bathe to his heart's content. The fact of its fullness creates a freeness which none restrict. How I delight to talk about this, for I remember when I thought that the Lord Jesus was not free to me. I dreamed that I wanted Him and He would not have me, whereas it was all the other way—He was willing enough, but I was unwilling. Oh, poor sinner, there is nothing so free in all the world as Christ is. To all who pant after Him, desire Him, and need Him, He is free as the air you breathe.

Christ is like a river for *constancy*, too. Pools and cisterns dry up, but the river's song is—

"Men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever."

So is it with Jesus. The grace to pardon and the power to heal are not a spasmodic force in Him—they abide in Him always. He saved a thousand years ago, He still saves. He saves all day long and all night long. Whether we sleep or wake, the river still flows on, sounding no trumpet, but steadily pursuing its course. And so the pardoning grace of God is flowing all day and all night long, all the year round, quietly blessing thousands. Blessed be God for this! Today is the Sabbath and to me it seems as if the river widened out and poured its bounty over a greater area. Oh, that you would drink of it, poor sinner, today. It still flows, whether you refuse it or accept it. Oh, suffer it not to flow in vain for you.

The text speaks of rivers, which implies both *variety and unity*—upon this we cannot enlarge, but must dwell upon the idea of *force*. Nothing is stronger than a river. It cuts its own way and will not be hindered in its course. Who shall dam up the Mississippi? Who shall enchain the Amazon? They roll where they will, following the course which infinite sovereignty marked out for them. If the rock is in the river's way, it will wear it down. If the cliff intrudes, it must fall—being undermined by the current and falling—it must disappear. The river waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men, but follows its predestined course. Glory be to God, Christ Jesus will accomplish the divine purposes, the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. None can stay His course—winding this way and that, He must go to this sinner and the other—He cleanses a dying thief and waters some of "Caesar's household." Between the high hills of proud opposition, He speeds His way and makes glad the lowly valleys of the contrite in heart. Neither death nor hell can stay His course. He sweeps away all opponents even as that mighty river, the river Lisbon, swept away the armies of Jabin. And when it seems as if there is no longer a channel for the gospel, the truth leaps down the precipice in some great reformation or revival like a glorious Niagara—and the wonders of divine power are seen more clearly—the Lord making bare His arm in the eyes of all the people. Flow on, O river of God, forevermore.

II. Secondly, WE WILL CONSIDER A SPECIAL EXCELLENCE which the text mentions. "Rivers of water *in a dry place*."

I cannot tell you how I leaped at that word on my own account. In this country, we do not value rivers so much because we have springs and wells in all our villages and hamlets. But in the country where Isaiah lived, the land is parched and burnt up without rivers. You can trace the Jordan and the other streams by the fringe of vegetation skirting their banks and consequently, a river is greatly prized in a dry place. Ah, my brethren, when the Man Jesus Christ came here with blessings from God, He brought rivers into the dry place of our humanity. When He came down among Abraham's race, He brought rivers of water into the dry old stock of Jesse. When Judah had lost her king, He came to renew the royalty of the house of David and today, we Gentiles, who had been cut off from all covenant blessings and left like the desert while Israel was like a garden, we have Jesus Christ coming among us as rivers of

water in a dry place. Jesus has come to you, my brethren, and what a dry place your heart was by nature. Ah, think how dry it was before Christ came and caused springs of life to water your soul. As I think of my own state by nature, I can only compare it to a howling wilderness waste, "a salt land and not inhabited," in which there was great drought—a dry and thirsty land where no water was. The Sahara is not more destitute of water brooks than is human nature of anything that is good, and yet Jesus Christ has come into your human nature and into mine and made the dry land springs of water. O brethren, what a dry place our nature would still be at this very moment if it were not for the presence of Jesus as the river of the water of life. We have grown older, but our nature has not improved. Years have gone over us, but not even a cloud, the size of a man's hand, has come to us by nature's energy. Our only watering has been through our interceding Savior.

So far as the flesh is concerned, I see myself more prone to sin than ever, weaker than ever for all good things, more consciously dead and withered apart from Christ. If you have found springs in the waste places of your nature, I confess I have not—my nature is, indeed, still a dry place. Emptiness, oh, that is hardly the word for it—one feels worse than empty! Dead, oh how dead! Even those of us who try to live near to God have cold seasons. I suppose perfect people have no such confessions to make, but I am not one of them. I mourn over seasons in which I cannot pray as I would, and rise groaning from my knees. I suffer from temptations without and fighting within, and I cannot always alike rejoice in God, although I know He is always worthy of all my joy. I lament that it is so, but so it is with me. There may be persons who can always glide along like a tram-car on the rails without a solitary jerk, but I find that I have a vile nature to contend with and spiritual life is a struggle with me. I have to fight from day to day with inbred corruption, coldness, deadness, barrenness. And if it were not for my Lord Jesus Christ, my heart would be as dry as the heart of the damned, and have no more life, or light, or goodness in it than hell itself. This, however, I can say, I value His fullness all the more because I am so empty, and I prize His power the more because I am so weak. I find I cannot speak or think well enough of my Lord, nor ill enough of myself. Nothingness and emptiness, vanity and sin are my sole and only heritage by nature. All my fullness lies in Christ and every excellence I can ever claim must come from Him and Him alone.

Do not many of you find your outward circumstances very dry places? Are you rich? Ah, my brethren, wealthy society is generally as dry a place as the granite hills. "Gold and the gospel seldom agree." Are you poor? Poverty is a dry place to those who are not rich in faith. Are you engaged in business from day to day? How often do its cares parch the soul, like the heat of the desert! To rise up early and to toil late amid losses and crosses is to dwell in a dry place. Oh, to feel the love of Christ flowing then! This is to have rivers of water. To have Christ near when you are

losing your money, when bills are being dishonored and commercial houses falling—this is true religion. To rejoice in Christ when you are out of work, poor man—to have Christ when the wife is sick, Christ when the darling child has to be buried, Christ when the head is aching, Christ when the poor body is half starved—this is sweetness. Ah, you will never know the sweetness of Christ till you know the bitterness of trial. You cannot know His fullness till you see your emptiness. I pray that it may be our experience to always feel ourselves going down and Christ going up, ourselves getting poorer and poorer apart from Him, while we know more and more of the priceless blessings which are ours in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The point then of the whole seems to me to be this—that Christ is a river of abounding grace, but He is most so to those who are most dry. Alms are only sought by the poor, the physician is only esteemed by the sick, the lifeboat is only valued by the man that is drowning. So, my brethren, Christ will be dearer and dearer to you just in proportion as you have less and less esteem of yourself. "Rivers of water in a dry place."

III. Now, WE CLOSE WITH THE PRACTICAL LESSON from it all.

First, *see the goings out of God's heart to man, and man's way of communing with God.* Other rivers rise in small springs and many tributaries combine to swell them, but the river I have been preaching about rises in full force from the throne of God. It is as great a river at its source as in its after course. Oh, my brethren, whenever you stoop down to drink of the mercy which comes to you by Jesus Christ you are having fellowship with God, for what you drink comes direct from God Himself. Think of this, now. You desire to have a communication established between you and God, and the Lord says, "Here am I coming to you, coming in a great river of blessedness. Take of Me. Accept what comes to you through Jesus Christ. Every drop of it has come from My throne and is full of the love which is My essence." Oh, poor sinner, do you see this? What a simple, what a safe, what a suitable way God has prepared to bring you into communion with Himself! You are to be the receiver, and He the giver—He the everlasting source of all your supplies, and you simply the partaker of His benefits. Ask what God is, and the answer is, God is a river of goodness streaming down to men through the person of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, *see what a misery it is that men should be perishing and dying of soul-thirst when there is this river so near.* That men should die of thirst would be horrible, but that such deaths should happen all along the banks of a river is shocking indeed. What ails them? Have they never heard of it? Dear brethren, let the thought press heavily on you that millions of our race have never heard of Jesus. In China, in parts of India, in Africa, in large tracts of country, myriads live and die without having heard the sweet name of Jesus. Are we doing all we can for missions, do you think? Are we all sure that we give as much as we should, and pray as we should, and work as we should for missions? It is a sad thing that Christ has come into the world and yet men perish by millions.

Ah, yet there is a sadder thought still, for millions of men know all about this river and yet do not drink. Many of our own fellow citizens know the plan of salvation by Jesus Christ, but they are struck with a strange insanity—they would sooner die of thirst than drink of God's own river. O God, we sometimes say, "Have pity," but You have had pity and therefore, we had better to pray, "Teach men to have pity upon themselves."

Another lesson is, *let us learn if we have any straitness, where it must lie*. It cannot be in Christ, because He is as rivers of water. So the next time we feel that we are straitened, that we have little grace, little power, little joy, let us know where the fault lies. Our cup is small, but the river is not. If you have not, brethren, it is not because God does not give—it is because you are not open to receive. "You have not because you ask not, or because you ask amiss." O church of God, if you are weak, it is not because God is weak. If you cannot get at sinners, it is not because God cannot reach them. You are not straitened in Him, you are straitened in your own heart.

Is Christ a river, then, last of all, *drink of Him*, all of you. To be carried along on the surface of Christianity, like a man in a boat, is not enough—you must drink or die. Many are influenced by the externals of religion, but Christ is not *in* them. They are on the water, but the water is not in them. And if they continue as they are, they will be lost. A man may be in a boat on a river and yet die of thirst if he refuses to drink. And so may you be carried along and excited by a revival, but unless you receive the Lord Jesus into your soul by faith, you will perish after all. Faith is as simple a thing as drinking, but you must have it—you must believe or die. If a man were set up to his neck in water like Tantalus, and if all the rivers in the world flowed by him, he would expire in the pangs of thirst if he did not drink. Some of you have been up to your neck in the river for years. As I look at those pews, I cannot but remember that rivers of love and mercy have been flowing right up to your lips—and yet you have not drunk. He who dies so deserves to die. He who perishes of thirst in such a condition must perish with a sevenfold emphasis. God help you. I know not what more I can ask Him to do for you. Has He not done enough in giving rivers of mercy to you in Christ?

And if you have drunk of this stream, the next thing I say is, *live near it*. We read of Isaac that he dwelt by the well. It is good to live hard by an inexhaustible spring. Commune with Christ and get nearer to Him each day. Wade into this river, as you have done, till the water is up to your ankles. Go on till it is up to your knees. Go on till it washes your heart and lungs—yes, go on till you find it a river to swim in.

I should like to say, last of all, if Christ is like a river, let us be like the fishes that *live in it*. I sat under a beech tree some months ago in the New Forest. I gazed up into it, measured it, and marked the architecture of its branches, but suddenly I saw a little squirrel leap from branch to branch, and I thought, "After all, this beech tree is far more to you than

to me, for you live in it. It delights me, it instructs me, and it affords me shade, but you live in it and upon it." So we know something about rivers and they are very useful to us, but to the *fish* the river is its element, its life, its all. So, my brethren, let us not merely read about Christ and think of Him, and speak of Him—but let us live *on* Him and *in* Him as the squirrel in the tree and the fish in the river. Live *by* Him, and live *for* Him—you will do both if you live *in* Him—

"Roll over me, you heavenly stream,
I find my element in Thee.
This my true life and bliss I desire,
In Christ, my Lord, absorbed to be.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 32.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—170, 541, 488.

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FAITH'S ULTIMATUM
NO. 1244

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 18 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."
Job 13:15.

THIS is one of the supreme sayings of Scripture. It rises like an alpine summit, clear above all ordinary heights of speech. It pierces the clouds and glistens in the light of God. If I were required to quote a selection of the most sublime utterances of the human mind, I should mention this among the first—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." I think I might almost say to the man who thus spoke what our Lord said to Simon Peter when he had declared him to be the Son of the Highest—"Flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you." Such tenacious holding, such immovable confidence, such unstaggering reliance are not products of mere nature, but rare flowers of rich divine grace. The text contains a precious jewel of grace, fitly set in the purest gold of choice speech. Happy is the man upon whose arm it can be worn as an ensign in the day of battle.

It is well worthy of observation that in these words Job answered both the accusations of Satan and the charges of his friends. Though I do not know that Job was aware that the devil had said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not set a hedge about him and all that he has?" yet he answered that base suggestion in the ablest possible manner, for he did, in effect, say, "Though God should pull down my hedge and lay me bare as the wilderness itself, yet will I cling to Him in firmest faith." The arch-fiend had also dared to say that Job had held out under his first trials because they were not sufficiently personal. "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life. But put forth Your hand, now, and touch his bones and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face." In the brave words before us, Job most effectually silences that slander by, in effect, saying, "Though my trial is no longer the slaying of my children, but of myself, yet will I trust in Him." He thus, in one sentence, replies to the two slanders of Satan and thus, unconsciously, does truth overthrow her enemies, defeating the secret malice of falsehood by the simplicity of sincerity. Job's friends also had insinuated that he was a hypocrite. They inquired of him, "Who ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off?" They thought themselves quite safe in inferring that Job must have been a deceiver, or he would not have been so specially punished. To this accusation Job's grand declaration of his unstaggering faith was the best answer possible, for none but a sincere soul could thus speak. Will a hypocrite trust in God when He slays him? Will a deceiver cling to God when He is smiting him? Assuredly not. Thus were

the three miserable comforters answered if they had been wise enough to see it.

Our text exhibits a child of God under the most severe pressure and shows us the difference between him and a man of the world. A man of the world under the same conditions as Job would have been driven to despair and in that desperation, would have become morosely sullen, or defiantly rebellious! Here you see what, in a child of God, takes the place of desperation. When others despair, he trusts in God. When he has nowhere else to look, he turns to his heavenly Father. And when, for a time, even in looking to God, he does not meet with conscious comfort, he waits in the patience of hope, calmly expecting aid and resolving that, even if it does not come, he will cling to God with all the energy of his soul. Here, all the man's courage comes to the front, not, as in the case of the ungodly, obstinately to rebel, but bravely to confide. The child of God is courageous, for he knows how to trust. His heart says, "My Lord, it is bad with me now, and it is growing worse, but should the worst come to the worst, still will I cling to You and never let You go." In what better way can the believer reveal his loyalty to his Lord? He evidently follows his Master, not in fair weather only, but in the worst and roughest days. He loves his Lord, not only when He smiles upon him, but when He frowns. His love is not purchased by the liberality of his Lord's golden hands, for it is not destroyed by the smiting of His heavy rod. Though my Lord puts on His sternest looks, though from fierce looks He should go to cutting words, and though from terrible words, He should proceed to cruel blows which seem to beat the very life out of my soul, yes, though He take down the sword and threaten to execute me, yet is my heart steadfastly set upon one resolve, namely, to bear witness that He is infinitely good and just. I have not a word to say against Him, nor a thought to think against Him. Much less would I wander from Him, and though He slay me, I would trust in Him.

What is my text but an Old Testament version of the New Testament, "Quis separabit?"—Who shall separate? Job does but anticipate Paul's question, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Was not the same Spirit in both Job and Paul? Is He also in us? If so, we are men indeed, and our speech is with power and this declaration to us is no idle boast, no foolish bravado, though it would be ridiculous indeed, if there were not a gracious heart behind it to make it good. It is the conquering shout of an all-surrendering faith which gives up all but God. I wish that we may all have its spirit this morning, that whether we suffer Job's trial or not, we may at any rate have Job's close adherence to the Lord, his faithful confidence in the Most High.

There are three things in the text—*a terrible supposition*—"Though He slay me;" a *noble resolution*, "yet will I trust in Him;" and thirdly, *a secret appropriateness*. This last will require a little looking into, but I hope to

make it clear that there is a great appropriateness in our trusting while God is slaying us—the two things go well together, though it may not so appear at first.

I. First, then, here is A TERRIBLE SUPPOSITION—"Though He slay me." The Lord is here set forth as a slayer of His trusting servant. An idea full of terror. *It is a supposition which, in some senses, cannot be tolerated for a minute*—"Though He slay me." Here I am, His dear child, one whom He has loved from before the foundation of the world. One for whom He laid down His life upon the Cross. One of whom He has said, "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands." How can He slay me? If He does so, it can only be in a minor sense. As to my best and truest life, it must be safe, for He is its author and guardian, and cannot be its destroyer. Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she could not have compassion on the son of her womb? Could she suffer a child of hers to die while she had power to keep it alive? Would she lay violent hands upon the child of her love and destroy it? God forbid. Neither will God destroy, or suffer to be destroyed, any of His own dear children. Jesus has solemnly said—"I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." The fairest children of the earth will die, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and all flesh is as decaying grass. But the feeblest child of God will live forever, for the life of God in every degree is immortality. Time will put out the sun. The lamp of the moon will grow dim in ages yet to come, but neither time nor age shall quench a solitary spark of heaven-born grace and light. Though faith is but as a grain of mustard seed, it is essentially a living thing, and it is not conceivable that God Himself should slay that which is quickened with His life. Though it is imperceptible sometimes even to the possessor of it, and though it should raise many painful questions as to whether it is there at all, yet if it is there, God will preserve it even to the end. Come, child of God, you must not suppose that the Lord will slay you forever. You must not allow suppositions which would dishonor your God. You may suppose what you like if it is innocent, but you must not suppose that which would blaspheme the divine love, or cast a slur upon God's fidelity to His promise. He may cast you aside for awhile, but He cannot cast you away forever. He may take away your goods, but not your highest good. He may allow a cloud to rest upon your reputation, a blight to fall upon your usefulness, and a storm to sweep away your happiness, but His mercy is not clean gone forever—He has not in anger turned away His heart from you. He has chastened you sorely, but He has not given you over unto death.

No, you must not interpret the supposition of the text as though it said, "Though He leave me to perish, though He cast me into hell," for that can never be. But I make bold to say that even if the devil were to whisper in your ear that the Lord would finally destroy you, it would be a glorious thing if you could bravely reply, "And if He did I would still trust Him." One old saint once used very daring and perhaps, unjustifiable language when he said in ecstasy of love, "If God casts me into hell, I will hold so fast by Him that He shall go there, too. I will not let Him go and hell itself will be no hell to me while He is there." Beloved, say in your soul—"Though the Lord should condemn me, I will not rebel, but confess

that He is just. Though He should refuse to hear my prayers, yet He is an infinitely good and blessed God, and I will still praise Him." But beloved, it cannot be that God should slay or condemn a believer, and you need not tolerate the supposition. Blessed be His name, He has not cast away the people whom He did foreknow. Neither has one soul that trusted in Him ever been forsaken.

The terrible supposition before us is inclusive of all possible ills. "Though He slay me." He means that if every form of evil up to actual death should come upon him, yet would he trust in God. Though he should lose all that he had in flock or field, in purse or portion, yet would he trust. In Job's case, away went the oxen and the asses, away went the sheep, away went the camels and away went all the servants. And each time, as the messenger came breathlessly running in, he said, "I, only, am left alone to tell you." At last the worst news of all came, for all his children were taken away at a stroke. All was gone, for his wife was as good as lost, too, since she went over to the enemy, and said, "Curse God and die." Well, says Job, "Though my troubles have left me bare of all but life, though nothing remains to me but this dunghill and the broken pot-sherd with which I scrape my sores, yet will I trust in the Lord." Oh, it was bravely said!

In this resolve, as we have seen, he includes not only all losses of property, but all bereavements of friends. And I should like you Christian people to look this in the face. Perhaps the Lord may suddenly take away from you the dearest object of your heart's affection—your husband or your wife—can you trust Him then? The almost idolized children may be removed, one by one, and leave sad vacancies within your heart. O fond wife, the beloved of your soul may pass away in the prime of his manhood. The brother may be cut down as the green herb and the sister fade as a flower. Parents, children, brethren—any and all of these may be put far from you—and you may find yourselves as lone trees, whereas now you are surrounded by a kindred forest. You may be the last of the roses, left alone, scarcely blooming, but bowing your head amid the heavy showers of sorrow which drench you to the soul. Now, believer, if you are in such a deplorable case as that, can you still say, "If the Lord should go even further than this, should His next arrows penetrate my own lacerated heart, even then, as I bleed to death, I will kiss His hand"?

Job included in his supposition all kinds of pain. We can hardly imagine the bodily agony of Job when he was covered with boils from the soles of his feet unto his head. None could approach him, the disease was so foul, neither could he endure to be touched. He says, "Though I have all these boils and even should they grow worse, so that the pains I now endure should become unendurable, and should I suffer the very anguish of death itself, yet still would I put my trust in my God. Neither poverty, loneliness, nor fierce torment shall make me forsake the Lord, nor shall all put together cause me to doubt Him." What a victory of faith is this!

Job, at that time, also suffered from dishonor, for those who once looked up to him with respect, now despised him in their hearts. He says that those whose fathers he would have disdained to have set with the dogs of his flock, opened their mouths against him, and whereas, when

he stood in the street, princes were silent in his presence to listen to his wisdom, now among the most base of mankind, he had become a song and a byword. As for his mistaken friends, he had grown so weary of them that he said, "O that you would altogether hold your peace and it would be your wisdom." Poor Job was sorely galled with the scorn poured on him at a time when he deserved both sympathy and honor, but yet his faith cries, "If I am still more despised and forgotten as a dead man out of mind, yet will I trust in You, my God."

Connected with all this, the afflicted patriarch must have felt much depression of spirit. Did he not say, "Even today is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. For God makes my heart soft and the Almighty troubles me"? Those of us who are subject to depression of spirit find much that is congenial in the Book of Job. His music is in tune with our own. How bitterly does he wail at times! What wondrous insight has he into the mystery of sorrow! Though his grief has never been thoroughly weighed, nor his calamities laid in the balances together, yet have his woes been considered by thousands of mourners. They have ministered a wealth of consolation to them. Job does not exclude his own despondencies from his resolves. No, he mainly intends them, for these are, in a special sense, a man's own personal slaying and he says, "Though He slay *me"*—though my heart should break with anguish, pierced through with despondency, yet will I put my trust in God. I began by calling the supposition of our text a terrible one, and now I claim that I have shown it to be so, since it includes the coming upon us of all sorts of ills.

Listen, yet again. *This supposition goes to the extreme of possibility*, if not beyond it, for it will be hard to find a case in which God has really slain any of His servants. The martyrs were slain for Him, but not by Him. To none of His children, save one, has the Lord been as Abraham was to Isaac when he unsheathed the knife to slay him. If it had been so, could we have been as the lamb beneath the sacrificial knife? The stones which slew Stephen and the sword which slew James were in the hands of cruel men and not in the hands of God. But God Himself is here supposed to slay us. Now, though He has not actually done so, we may inquire whether we could resign ourselves to Him, even if He should take life and all with His own hands. Could we lie on the altar and not struggle? Do we hate, even, our own life for love of Him? What do we say? Is our love stronger than death? God grant it may be found so.

But *this supposition goes further than matters ever will go*. Why then does the patriarch suppose such a case? I answer because only by such suppositions can he express his faith to the fullest. Remember that psalm, "Therefore we will not fear, though the earth is removed, and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea"? We are not expecting the earth to move nor the mountains to plunge into the ocean—but in order to express our confidence, we declare that even such a quaking would not affect the foundation of our faith. God Himself meets His people in the same manner, by saying, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed." Child of God, you may suppose what never will occur, if you like, and project your soul

by that supposition into depths of woe and grief into which you will never actually come, and yet, through divine grace you will resolve, "If it came even to that, I would still trust in Him."

Though the text supposes what will not actually occur, yet *it is a just description of what often does occur as far as our conceptions* go. Have you ever known what it is to be, in your own conceptions, slain by God? My heart has known it often. It is as death itself to feel all your religion melt away like the hoar frost of the morning when the sun has risen. All your joys in which you delighted fly away like birds when a man claps his hands. Have you ever had to begin all over again, at the very alphabet of repentance and childlike faith—and find even that no easy work? Did you never know what it was to get your cup right full of what you thought was holy joy and sweet experience and then for the Lord to turn it, bottom upward, and let you see that it was a mixture of self-conceit and sentimentalism, with thick dregs at the bottom of pride and falsehood? Can you say with David, "I have seen an end of all perfection"? Have you ever been brought down from imaginary riches to bitter but honest poverty? Have you ever thought you were becoming so wonderfully sanctified that you could scarcely lay a split sheet of tissue paper between you and perfection—and then all of a sudden the Lord has laid you naked and made you loathe the sight of your inborn corruptions? You have been as a cup which bubbled at the top and frothed over, and the Lord has blown off the froth and made you see the black draught of your inward vileness. God has many ways of thus slaying, in His children, all that ought to die. Thus He kills the spiritual hypocrisy which is so common in us all. Our life seems, at times, to run all into puffballs and bloated fungi of self-glorying. We think that we are something when we are nothing. And then the Lord prunes us back to our real condition. Do you know what it is to be thus slain? Ah, my brethren, at times our life is a long experience of the power of death. Do you know what it is to say, "Is this prayer? Why, while I prayed, my thoughts were perplexed, distracted and wandering. Is this faith? Why, even on the most vital points my soul dares scarcely speak with confidence! Is this love?—love to Christ, which even while I exercise it accuses me on account of its lukewarmness and lack of self-denying ardor. Can this be spiritual life? Life at which I blush and over which I mourn! Life which scarcely reaches so far as feeling and when it does, soon subsides into insensibility!" Beloved brethren, I speak from experience. All this is a kind of slaying by which the Lord hides pride from men and keeps them from the snares of vain confidence. Has He not written, "I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal"? In these times of wounding and killing, which are very common to the experience of some of the children of God, the only thing we can do is still to trust—"Though He slay me, I will trust in Him." Trust Him though He sifts out nine-tenths of your hopes, burns up all your experiences, grinds your evidences to powder, crushes all your realized sanctities and sweeps away all your rests and refuges. Then, indeed, is the best time of all to exercise true faith.

Once more, *the grim supposition of the text, if ever it were realized by anybody, was realized by our Lord Jesus*. Our great covenant Head knows to the full what His members suffer. God did slay Him and glory

be to His blessed name, He trusted God while He was being slain. "It pleased the Father to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief." Yet from the lips of our dear Lord we hear no expressions of unbelief. Read the 22nd psalm, where He says, "Our fathers trusted in You, they trusted in You and You did deliver them, but I am a worm, and no man." Hear how He pleads with God and specially listen to His dying words, where, though He says, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" yet a few minutes later He cries, "Into Your hands I commit My spirit." What! Into the hands of a God who had forsaken Him and smitten Him? Did He commit Himself into those hands? Yes, into those very hands. And herein we must follow in His steps. Though the Lord cuts, hews, hacks, tears, and grinds us to powder, yet out of the dust, the tears and the blood of the conflict, we must look up to Him and say, "I still trust You." Here is the patience of the saints! Here is the glory of faith! Blessed is the man who thus becomes more than a conqueror. I say it calmly, I would sooner be able to do as Job did, than to be one of yonder seraphim who have never suffered and consequently, have never clung to a slaying God. I count it the grandest possibility of a created being that it is able to completely yield itself up into the Creator's hands and unwaveringly believing in the Creator's love, in hope believing against hope. O, royal word of a right royal soul, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

II. Secondly, we have before us A NOBLE RESOLUTION—"Yet will I trust in Him." Job meant that he was confident that the Lord was just. And though he did not feel that the suffering he was then enduring was sent upon him for his sins, yet he never doubted the righteousness of God in so afflicting him. His friends said, "You see, Job, you suffer more than anybody else. Therefore you must have been a hypocrite, for God will not lay upon any man more than is just." "No," said Job, "I have been upright before the Lord. And yet, on the other hand, I do not accuse the Lord of injustice, I am sure He does what is right. And I trust Him as much as ever." There were two things to which Job stuck very firmly—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him, but I will maintain my own ways before Him"—that is, I will not admit that I have been a hypocrite, for I have been sincerely obedient to Him. Nor will I be driven to the other conclusion, that God is unjust in afflicting me. Job did not understand the Lord's reasons, but he continued to confide in His goodness. He set no terms or limits to the Lord's actions, but left all to His absolute will and was sure that whatever He might do, it must be right. Should death prevent all apparent possibility of making up to him all his losses and woes, his faith leaped over the sepulcher and saw justice and mercy alive in the realms beyond, making all things right in the end. O, it was grand, thus, to champion almighty goodness in the teeth of death itself.

Now, dear brethren, you and I, if we are resting upon God, may say, "Whatever happens, though I may not be able to understand God's dispensations to me any more than Job understood God's dispensations towards him, yet I am quite sure of this—that He will help me in my trouble and I will, therefore, cast myself upon Him—believing that as my days my strength shall be. Or if He does not aid me in my trouble with manifest help, I will still trust that He will bring me out of it, that if He seems

to forsake me for a while, yet it shall be said of me as of Gad, "A troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last."

If I should neither receive present help nor immediate deliverance, yet I am persuaded that my good is designed by my long trial and that God is making the worst things work out my everlasting benefit and His own glory—therefore I will subunit to His will and expect, in the end, to see the lovingkindness of the Lord. Yes, and if I should have neither present help nor deliverance, nor see any immediate good come of my affliction, yet will I repose myself upon God, for in some mysterious way or other I shall yet know that His providence was right and good, for He cannot err. His dealings must be wise, He cannot be unkind. His actions must be tender. Though the sharp edge of death itself invades me, I will hold to this belief, that You, O Lord, do all things right. If down to the sepulcher my steps must go and through the gloomy valley's darkest shade my pilgrimage must wind, yet will I fear no evil, for Your rod and staff shall be my confidence. And I will be sure that He who bids me die will bid me live again—up from the grave my body shall yet rise—and in my flesh I see shall God. As for my spirit, though it pass through the death shade, it shall come forth into a brighter light and in the eternity of glory it shall receive abundant recompense for the sorrows of the present time. This is the faith for us to hold at all times—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Why, do you think, Job was able to speak so positively about his trusting God? Was it not because he knew God? "They that know Your name will put their trust in You." If you would believe God, you must know Him. Those who are strangers to Him cannot trust Him. O, beloved, only think what God is. Sometimes, when I am contemplating His being and character, I feel as if I could leap for joy. And when I touch upon the theme in the pulpit, I feel as if I could talk on forever in His praise and use the grandest, sweetest, richest words in human language to tell what a blessed God my God is. What! The Lord do wrong to any of us? Impossible! The Lord be unkind to us? The supposition cannot be endured for a single moment. After once knowing Him, we feel that all the goodness and kindness of fathers, mothers, brethren, children, husbands, wives—all put together—is only like one single drop of sweetness compared with that ocean full of honey which is to be found in His infinite love. Besides, we have not only His attributes to trust, but His past actions to us. Did my Lord forgive me all my sin? And after that will He ever be unkind to me? Did He lay down His life for me upon the accursed tree and can I dream that He will desert me? Have I looked into the wounds of my dying Savior and shall I ever murmur if He should multiply pains and sufferings and losses and crosses to me? God forbid. Such love as His forbids all fear. Did you ever lean on the Bridegroom's arm? Have you ever sung like the bride in the canticle, "His left hand is under my head, and His right arm does embrace me"? Did He ever stay you with dragons and comfort you with apples while your soul was sick with too much delight? And after all that, will you indulge harsh thoughts of Him? O, no, till the day breaks and the shadows flee away, we cannot think harshly of Him who has dealt so kindly with us. His ways must be right. Such wondrous acts of love as His have proved to us beyond all

question that He is love, essential love and cannot, therefore, do us an ill turn.

Besides this, we know the relationship in which He stands to us. It has been said that you cannot trust an enemy and it has been equally well added you cannot trust a reconciled enemy—suspicion lingers long. But our God is no reconciled enemy, though He is sometimes represented as if He were so. He has loved us with an everlasting love. His is no friendship of yesterday, no passion which began to burn a month or two ago. Long before the hills lifted up their heads, He loved us. The bands of His Fatherhood are upon us and we can well commit ourselves into His hands.

Are any of us in great trouble, this morning? Then let us trust in the Lord, now, for what else can we do? Suppose we give up trusting in Him—to whom or where should we go? If this anchor drags, what other holdfast can there be? Let us continue to trust our Lord, for He deserves it. He has never done anything that could justify our doubting Him. Has He ever been false to us? Ah, Judas, you sold your Master, but your Master never sold you. Ah, unbelieving heart, you have wandered from Jesus, but He never wandered from you. If you do not doubt Him till you have cause for doubting Him, it will not be soon. Let us trust our God, for this is the sweetest comfort a man can have. This side of heaven, nothing can yield the afflicted man such support under trial as when he can fall back upon the strong love of God and believe that the wisdom of God is overruling all. Nothing tends to sanctify our trials and produce good results from them, as faith in God. This is the Samson which finds honey in the lion. For a thousand reasons I would say, "Trust in the Lord at all times: you people, pour out your hearts before Him. God is a refuge for us." Say, each one of you, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!"

III. And, now, the last point is this—A SECRET APPROPRIATENESS about it all.

There is a something about our Lord's slaying us which should help us to trust Him. I would sooner the Lord should slay me with troubles and trials than let me alone in my sin. What says the Scriptures? "If you are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards and not sons, for what son is he whom the father chastens not?" I do not so much pity the children of God who have a cross to carry—I reserve my fears for those worldlings who are not in trouble as other men, neither plagued like other men. It would be very foolish for the afflicted one to say, "I am no child of God because He smites me"—there would be more reason in the sinner's saying, "I am no child of God, for I have my portion in this life." Surely there is something in you which God loves, or else He would not be killing that which He hates. If He hates the sin in you, it is a good sign, for where do we hate sin most? Why, in those we love most. If you see a fault in a stranger, you wink your eye and say but little. But in your own dear child you are deeply grieved to observe it. Where there is true love there is a measure of jealousy and the more burning the love, the more fierce the jealousy, especially on the part of Jesus Christ. Where He sees sin in those who are very dear to Him, His fury burns not against them, but against their sin—and He will not stop until He has

slain it. His rebukes are severe, not because of lack of love, but because He loves so much. An ungodly man met me some years ago, when I was suffering, and said to me in a jeering way, "Ah, whom the Lord loves, He chastens, I see." I said, "Yes, it is His custom." "Ah," he said, "so long as I am without the chastisement I am very content to be without the love." Oh, it brought the red into my cheeks and the tears into my eyes, and I cried, "I would not change places with you for 10,000 worlds. If my God were to afflict me from head to foot I would bear it joyfully sooner than live a moment without His love." When the Lord flogs us, we love Him, and we would not leave Him though the devil should bribe us with all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them. Our Father puts us, sometimes, into the black hole, and we are there crying bitterly under a sense of His wrath, but we love Him still, and if anybody were to find fault with Him, we would be up at once and say, "He is a good God and blessed be His name."

Note, again, that *the slaying of the creature is the very condition in which faith was born* and in which she delights to display her power. We are saved by passing from death unto life. As Noah was like a dead man, out of mind, shut up in the ark, and by this burial, passed into the new world. And as in the ordinance of baptism, we are in like figure buried with Christ that we may rise with Him. So faith took her birth in the death of the creature at the time when the new life was breathed into us. When God is slaying all that is capable of death and our new immortal life alone survives, faith feels as if her birthday had come over again and brought with it her native air.

Notice again, *it is at times when God is slaying us that our faith is being tested* whether it is true or not. When all the winds are fair, how can you tell whether your boat would bear a storm? How much faith some of us have at times! Have you ever felt as if you could fight seven devils with one hand? There was not a devil within seven miles when you were so bold—but when the smallest fiend has drawn near—your courage has oozed out. We are like an old man whom I once knew, who said to me, "Here am I, 80 years old, and through the winter I often think I wish I had a bit of mowing or reaping to do, for I feel quite young again. But as soon as harvest comes on, and I get down my old sickle, I have not done much before I feel the old man is a very old man and had better leave that work alone." Slaying times let us know whether our strength is real strength and whether our confidence is true confidence. And this is good, for it would be a great pity for us to be stocked with heaps of vain faith, fictitious grace, and ready-made holiness. Some of my friends talk as if they had boldness enough for a dozen people, but I am afraid if they were tried, as some of us are, they would find they had not half enough for one. This is the benefit of trial—it lets us see what is gold and what is tinsel—what is fact and what is fiction. Alas, how much religious fiction is abroad at this time!

Note further, that *slaying times are the most favorable for trusting God.* I have been putting a little riddle to myself. Here it is. Is it easier to trust God when you have nothing, or when you have all things? Is it easier to say, "Though He slay me, I will trust in Him," or to say, "Though He make me alive, I will trust in Him"? Will you think it over? Shall I help

you? Here is a man without a farthing in the world. His cupboard is bare, his flocks are cut off from the field, and his herds from the stall. Is it hard for that man to trust in God? If you say so, I will not dispute with you. But here is another man who has a bank full of gold. His meadows are covered with flocks and herds, his barns are ready to burst with corn, and his trade prospers on all hands. Now, sirs, is it easy for that man to trust God? Do you say, "Yes"? I say, "No." I say that he has a very hard task, indeed, to live by faith, and the probabilities are that when he says, "I trust God," he is trusting his barn or his bank. All things considered, it occurs to me that it is easier to trust God in adversity than in prosperity, because whatever trust there is in adversity is real trust. But a good deal of the faith we have in prosperity is a kind of trust which you will have to take upon trust—and whether it is faith or not is a matter of serious question. Sirs, where is the room for faith when you can see already all that you need? A full barn has no room for faith if she is any bigger than a mouse. But in an empty barn, faith has scope and liberty. When the brook Cherith is dried up, when the poor widow has nothing left but a handful of meal and a little oil, then there is room for the prophet to exercise faith. O, brethren, it is well to go into action with clear decks. In the name of God, with double-barreled guns full of strong faith, you can let the world and the flesh and the devil know what faith is. But while your deck is all hampered with comforts and visible resources, faith can scarcely stir a hand or move a gun. "Though He slay me"—well, that means everything is gone—only breath enough left for me just to exist. And now, my Lord, You are all in all to me. Now can I say, "Whom have I in heaven but You? There is none upon the earth that I desire but You."

Once more, *these slaying times* are very desirable occasions, because they *allow the child of God to show that he is not a mercenary professor*, held to Christ by a cupboard love. If God were always to prosper us, the world would say, "These Christians follow their God as stray dogs follow those who give them bones, but they have no sincere love." When the Lord falls a whipping us, and we love Him all the more, then they cannot say but what we are faithful. Nor can they deny the work of grace in our souls. Oh, you that are Christians as long as it is pleasant to be Christians. You who make your love to Christ depend upon your feeling happy—what despicable beings you are. Our Lord wants not such base disciples, but such as can say, "If I lose all I have, still I love You, O my Savior. Your sweet love is so precious that if death were threatened me I would still choose You to be my all in all." Love desires opportunities for proving her unselfish sacrifice and such is the opportunity of the text.

There are seeking souls here, this morning, and I daresay they have said, "Mr. Spurgeon has been describing great faith—we shall never get to that." I have been thinking, dear souls, what kind of a man is most like a little child. Is it not a very old man? What kind of faith is most like new-born faith? Why, the ripest and most advanced faith. My text is very old faith—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." But the very first faith I had in Christ—I remember it well—was just like it. I thought He would destroy me. I could not see how He could do otherwise and be a just God. I thought He must strike me down if I went to Him. He seemed

to stand with a drawn sword in His hand. But I felt, "Well, if He does slay me, I had better die by His hand than remain His enemy." And I went to Him. I was like the boy who ran away from his home and dared not return because he feared his father would flog him. He was out all night, shivering, cold and wet. He had nothing to eat all day. By the time he got to the next evening, such was his dread of being alone all through another night, that he said to himself, "I would sooner feel my father's rod than lie here." And so he went home and was received with tenderness. So with me. I thought if I went to the Lord, I should have to smart for it, but I concluded I would rather smart than be as I was. And so I went to Him and found I was safe. O poor souls, come to Jesus Christ in that fashion. Say—

"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;
That were to die, delightful thought,
As sinner never died."

Say, "If I go to hell, I will trust Christ. If I am cast away forever, I will trust Christ—and that cannot be, for, "He that believes in Him is not condemned." God grant you true faith, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 73.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
73 (PART 2), 689, 46 (VERSE 3).

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WHY MEN CANNOT BELIEVE IN CHRIST
NO. 1245

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

"How can you believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?"
John 5:44.

OUR Savior was addressing Himself to Pharisees who would not receive Him, and who, no doubt, pleaded that they *could* not believe on Him. They had just seen a very notable miracle worked by Him—a man who had been sick many years had been suddenly restored and that by a word. That miracle, being of the same nature as the wonderful works of the great Father, a miracle of tenderness and omnipotence, ought to have convinced them that Christ was the Son of God. They saw the miracle, however, and instead of drawing the proper inference, they began to quibble at the Master because He had performed it upon the Sabbath day. The teaching of our Lord's wonderful work of mercy and power was lost upon them. They could not, they would not see the finger of God in the miracle. Before this miracle had occurred, John the Baptist had come—the Elijah who was foretold to herald the Messiah. These Pharisees had felt a partial belief in John and the popular voice compelled them to stifle any unbelief concerning him which may have lingered in their hearts. They dared not say that his ministry was altogether of man, and consequently, they were posed by the Savior's question, "The ministry of John, was it from heaven or of men?" They could not answer the question, because if they denied his mission, the people would cry out against them. But on the other hand, if they confessed that John came from heaven, our Lord's reply would have been, "Why, then, did you not believe him and accept his testimony concerning Me?" They had, therefore, in addition to the miracle which Jesus worked, the testimony of John the Baptist, but still *they could not* believe. In addition to this, these men were exceedingly well acquainted with the Scriptures. The scribes made it their business to transcribe the Old Testament. They learned chapters and books by heart. Many of them were so well acquainted with the letter of Scripture that they could tell you which was the middle verse in each book. They have left us Masoretic notes which tell us what is the middle verse of the Bible, and the middle letter of the Bible, and like trifles. They were very curious and careful concerning all the little jots and tittles of the sacred manuscripts. Now, those books speak plainly of Christ. It is marvelous that men conversant with Old Testament Scripture could see Jesus Christ and observe His doings and not discover that He was the Messiah of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did

write. What witness can be plainer than that of Isaiah? Here was testimony upon testimony and yet in the teeth of it all, the Christ was rejected.

There are persons of this kind in the world still. They believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, though they do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. They accept the gospel narrative. They have no doubt, whatever, that Jesus, the Son of God, did live a life of perfection on earth and died as a substitutionary sacrifice. They also believe that He has risen from the dead and is gone into glory and has all power to save. They believe that the gospel message is true and yet they do not believe on the Lord Jesus—I mean that they do not so believe in Him in spirit and in truth as to believe unto salvation. They stop short with the knowledge of the outward facts. They do not come with their hearts and rest upon Him as their whole salvation. And if you ask them why not, they will not say that they will not, and shall not, but that they *cannot*. They plead a need of ability and they endeavor, as well as they can, to screen themselves behind that lack of ability. It is a monstrous thing, beyond all things monstrous, that a man should plead that he is under a necessity to call his God a liar. It is an amazing thing that a man should actually urge as an apology for remaining at enmity to God that he cannot believe Him. That is to say, he actually pleads the great sin of calling God a liar as an excuse for his rebellion. What is that but to insult the majesty of heaven with an excuse which is in itself the highest insolence? To say I cannot believe a man is to malign his character. And to say that I cannot believe God is to do Him the highest conceivable dishonor. To what a pitch has the human heart gone in extravagance of presumptuous daring, when it boldly tells God that it cannot believe His testimony concerning His Son? And though He says, "Believe in My Son and you are saved," man dares to answer Him thus, "We cannot believe in Your Son," as if the Christ of God were a liar, too, and He who died for us and gave the best pledge of His love was not to be trusted. Alas for our race! Has it, indeed, come to this, that it is a hard thing to rely upon one who cannot deceive us, and difficult to place our dependence upon one who is able to save to the uttermost?

Now, I want to deal as gently as I dare with those of you who have pleaded inability. It is very likely true that you cannot believe—let us try to find out the reason for it. The difficulty does not lie in the truth to be believed, for it is neither absurd nor incredible. Neither does it lie in any need of mental faculty in yourself by which you might believe. In your case, the difficulty is not a mental one, for you already believe in the inspiration of the Word of God and in the mission of Christ and so on. Your difficulty is a moral one, and I shall be faithful with you and try to put my finger upon it, just as Christ was faithful with these people and pointed out their moral difficulty—"How can you believe, which receive honor one of another?" May the Holy Spirit put power into my words.

First, let us speak of *the hindrance which was in the way of these Pharisees.* And then, secondly, let us make some guesses at *the hindrances in the way of some of you who cannot believe*.

I. First, THE HINDRANCE IN THE WAY OF THE PHARISEES.

It may be in the way of some here and therefore, let us note it carefully. They received honor one of another. Now, *the mere fact of receiving honor, even if that honor is rightly rendered, may make faith in Christ a difficulty*. A man gets to feel that he is something when others honor him and this is dangerous, for a man never believes in Jesus till he knows himself to be nothing. If others praise us, if they dwell upon our good points, if they pay respect to our rank, if they notice our abilities and talents, we are very apt to think that there should be some special way to heaven for us—some platform tickets to let us in by a back door a little apart from the common crowd of sinners, because we are so respected. And when the gospel says, "You must be saved as a sinner or not at all. You must give up all claims of merit and all reliance upon what you can do, or else you never can be saved," then, in all probability, the mere fact of our having received honor from other people will render it the more difficult for us to believe a doctrine which gives no honor to men, but stains the pride of all glory and casts human excellency into the dust.

It is still more perilous if, receiving honor, we come to expect it, as these people did. They expected their countrymen to pay them homage. Were they not called by their brethren, "great," and "distinguished," and "learned"? Were they not styled "doctor" and "rabbi" and the like? They came to think that the people ought to honor and esteem them. And thus they went a step deeper into the perilous floods, for *when a man gets to feel that he ought to be honored, he is in extreme danger*. I have known some who have been worthy of much honor and have received it without being in any degree elevated. With a proper modesty, they have shunned the fame which followed them and blushed when it has overtaken them. But it is not given to all men to bear the serious trial of honor. Too many men, receiving honor, come to expect honor—and he who expects honor is not in that condition of heart which renders it easy to fall down on his knees at the throne of divine mercy and cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

Now, some of you may be very much esteemed in your families—I am very glad you are. But perhaps without your knowing it, there is growing up the feeling that you *ought to be* esteemed. Now, dear friend, take care lest that should fester into a dangerous pride which will be your ruin. You know the simple story (I dare say you have heard it told), of the slave owner who was under conviction and who had a servant under impressions, too. But poor Sam found Christ and peace long before his master did, at which the master expressed his wonder. The slave replied, "Do you see, massa, when de angel comes along with a white robe, he says to massa, 'Here is a new robe for you.' Massa looks at his coat, a little worn and a few holes, but still pretty fine. 'Ah,' says massa, 'it will patch up

and do a little longer,' so massa does not get de new robe. De angel comes to Sam and says, 'Sam, new robe for you.' Sam says, 'Ah, I am all rags—I am all rags. Thank you!' and I put on de new robe at once, massa." Now, there is just that fear lest your very amiable character, and the respect it brings you, should lead you to be all the longer in accepting the righteousness of Jesus Christ. That, perhaps, is where your difficulty may be found at the present time. And if so, dear friend, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and you shall be exalted in due time, "For God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble." Remember, you may not be at all offensively proud to other people and yet there may be much pride in your heart in the sight of God—and this may be hindering you from believing the simple, precious gospel which is meant for the guilty and the lost and the ruined, and which, dear friends, is really meant for you if you did but know your own condition.

In the case of the Pharisees, however, there was something more than that. They not only received honor and expected honor, but *this honor was quite undeserved*. These men won respect by a false character. Oh, they were wonderfully good men and marvelously religious! They had two pennyworth of halfpence to give away and they sounded a trumpet in the street, and everybody said, "What a generous man that Rabbi Ben Simeon is! He has been giving money away at the corner of the street." When they paid their tithes, they were very particular to send the servant down into the garden to cut exactly a tenth-part of the mint, the anise, and the cumin. True, it was not worth two pence, it would not have made up a pound sterling in a hundred years—but it was intended to let everybody see their thorough-going principles. Everybody said, "Rabbi Ben Simeon is so very exact in the payment of his tithes. He is such a very holy man. He actually begged the collector to give him change for half a farthing so as to be quite correct, and not have even a sprig of mint on his conscience. He is very holy. Look at the border of his garment—other people wear theirs about an inch wide, but his is six inches at least. His tailor says that he is one of the godliest men he ever knew and spends a deal in trimmings. He is very holy and observes all the fasts—you can tell that by his sad countenance. He fasts twice in the week. Whoever heard of such self-denial? It is true he has a famous appetite on the other five days, but yet he is a very holy man."

They extolled one another for this ostentatious religiousness—this wonderful piety. But if you could have seen the Pharisee in private, you would have discovered that he really did not deserve a word of praise, for there, behind the door, what is that he is eating? Our Lord tells you—it is a widow's substance. "You devour widows' houses and for a show make long prayers." He has been washing his hands because he has been to market, and they need it, for an orphan's plunder defiles them. He carefully washes before he eats bread, but though he has made clean the outside of the cup and the platter, his inner part is full of filthiness. Albeit that he was strict as to ceremonies, he taught men to set aside the

commandments of God and follow instead the commandments of men. The fellow, instead of deserving to be praised, ought to have been hooted off the stage for his hypocrisy. Now, be sure of this, if a man has a fine character, but does not deserve it—if he allows that piece of dishonesty to go on, I do not wonder that he cannot believe in Jesus Christ. How could he? A man so false through and through—how could he believe the truth? If a man has lived in the dark all his life, do you wonder that the light makes his eyes ache and that, therefore, he hates it? If a man has been incrusted in filth from his birth and thrived in it, there is no wonder that he judges purity to be quite a superfluity. Believe in Jesus Christ? O man, while you are acting so vile a part, there is no wonder that you cannot believe in the honest, truthful Savior. Now, is there anybody here who wears before the eyes of men a fair character and yet, in secret, is anything but what he ought to be? O sir, if *you* cannot believe in Jesus, I can very well comprehend your difficulty. But O may God make you sincere—may He turn you into that honest and good ground on which the seed will grow, for it never will grow in a hypocrite's heart, let us preach to him as long as we may.

These people who received honor had a further difficulty, namely, that *always receiving this undeserved honor, they deceived themselves into believing that they deserved it*. A man who deludes other people, by degrees comes to delude himself—the deluder first makes dupes of others and then becomes a dupe to himself. I should not wonder but what the Pope really believes that he is "infallible," and that he ought to be saluted as, "his holiness." It must have taken him a good time to arrive at that eminence of self-deception, but he has got there, I dare say, by now, and every one who kisses his toe confirms him in his insane idea. When everybody else believes a falsehood concerning you, you come, at last, to believe it yourself, or at least to think that it may be so. These Pharisees, being continually called "the learned rabbi," "the holy scribe," "the devout and pious doctor," "the sanctified teacher," almost believed the flattering compliments. They used very grand phrases in those days and doctors of divinity were very common, almost as common as they are now. And the crowd of doctors and rabbis helped to keep each other in countenance by repeating one another's fine names till they believed they meant something. Dear friends, it is very difficult to receive honor, to expect it and yet to keep your eyesight, for men's eyes gradually grow dull through the smoke of the incense which is burned before them. And when their eyes become dim with self-conceit, it will not be at all unusual if they say, "We cannot believe in Jesus Christ." Their own great selves conceal the cross and make them unable to believe the truth.

Once more, the praise of men generally *turns the receivers of it into great cowards*. How could they believe in Jesus? Why, the people would leave off terming them "the learned rabbi," and "the celestial doctor," and their brethren would put them out of the synagogue. How could they believe and lose their status? Why, the people would say, "Has rabbi So-

and-So become a disciple of the carpenter's son? Has he put aside his wisdom and become a child, that he may be instructed by the Nazarene?" Why, the whole Sanhedrin would hiss out indignation against the learned man, the pious man, the devout man with his phylactery and the broad border on his garment, if he were to follow with publicans and harlots at the heels of the rejected Messiah. They were afraid! They were afraid! That same spirit which makes us love the praises of men makes us dread the threats of men. You cannot be pleased with the adulation of mankind without becoming fearful of their censure. It is a perilous thing to taste of human honor—if it makes you sick, it is the best thing it can do for you. If you despise it utterly, it is the only way of bearing it without being injured by it, for I say again, delight in the praises of others saps the foundations of a man's manhood—delight in the praise of men takes a man off from following after the glory of God and makes him afraid of following the truth if it costs him ridicule.

Now, I am afraid that there are many here who cannot believe in Jesus Christ *because they are afraid*. Yes, there is a commercial traveler over there! If he were to become a Christian, why, the next time he went into the commercial room, it would be known and there would be many odd remarks and no end of chaffing. You, Mr. Commercial, cannot follow Christ, can you? It is plain that you cannot believe and the reason is plain, too—you are a great coward! There is a working man over there and he knows that it is right to be a believer in Jesus Christ, but he cannot believe. And the reason is that he could not stand those coarse remarks which he would be sure to get in the shop tomorrow morning. He has not spirit enough to bear with ridicule. He is the slave of others and trembles at their laughter! I would sooner lie in my grave than be so mean a thing. Some are afraid of their brothers, others are afraid of the companions that they spend their evenings with. They have been, until this time, the first to lead the laugh at the evening carnival. If they were to be converted, they would lose their little empire and no longer be a favorite. They could not stand contempt! Oh, the fear of man, the fear of man. What cowards it makes of intelligent beings! It is not conscience that makes cowards of us one-half so much as the need of conscience—if we had more conscience we should have less fear of men—and would brave their scowls, and scorn their scorn, and bid defiance to their threats. But O how many live on the breath of their fellow men. To be approved—to be applauded—that is their heaven. But to be despised, to be sneered at, to be called a fool, to have some nickname applied to them—O no, they would sooner go to hell than bear that. I say that they are fools with an emphasis if that is the case. And if they will use their wits for a moment, I think they will see it so, for surely to be lost to please fools is to be a fool yourself. Please your friends as far as it is right, but never go to such an expense as the ruin of your souls to keep up friendship with sinners. That man is no friend of mine who would leave me ruin my soul. I have known *friends* come to a man and suck all

his estate out of him, lead him into speculations and schemes that serve their turn, and desert him when they have ruined him. Do you call such men *friends?* We do not, when we speak honestly, call them such, and shall I call him a friend who leads me into sinful amusements, who seeks my favor by teaching me how to indulge my passions and courts my praise while ruining my soul? He is my decided enemy. He cannot be my friend at all. Flee from all of his class, young man, if you cannot convert him. Do not be such a coward as to be afraid of anybody. Stand straight up as God made you and say, "No, He never made me to be afraid of man or woman either. He has made me a man and the very least thing I can do is to pray Him to make me manly enough to buy the truth and sell it not, and take up my cross and follow Christ, come what may of it."

Thus much upon the point as it concerned the Pharisees and some here.

II. Now, secondly, I am going to make some guesses as to OTHER HINDRANCES and you must all help me. You who cannot believe must help me by trying to find out how far I am describing your cases.

It is, no doubt, true that some are unable to believe in Christ because they have *a very high opinion of themselves*. They have never done anything amiss, at least, not much, and they have got very good hearts at bottom. And if there has been anything awry, they mean to mend and set it all right. They have no doubt that they will fare as well as most people. They will just do their best and God Almighty is very merciful and no doubt, they will, by some means, get on the right side of the Judge at last. Ah, dear friend, you must be purged of this perilous stuff or you cannot be saved. Your self-satisfaction is founded upon falsehood. Your heart is not so good as you think it, nor your conduct so commendable as you suppose. You have not done your best. If you will examine your past life, your conscience will find out many instances in which you did not do your best. And you cannot—mark that word—despite the apparent strength of that resolve of yours—you cannot conquer sin. I must say to you as Joshua to the children of Israel, "You cannot serve the Lord." You are going to fight a stout enemy and the spear you carry in your hand is but a reed which will snap in battle's perilous hour. You think that you shall chase out the Canaanites, but they have chariots of iron and you cannot drive them out. I wish you would give up thinking that you can, for as long as you are strong and good and meritorious, you will never be saved. Confess that you have failed. Confess that you are weakness itself. Lay hold on the divine strength. Leave yourself in the hands of Jesus. Yield to His Holy Spirit and sin will be conquered. Unless you do this, the real reason why you cannot believe in Christ is because you believe in yourself, and that is a very sorry reason for unbelief. The lie of self-conceit prevents your seeing the great truth of Christ's ability to save.

In many cases there is *a strong aversion to confession of sin and to an approach to God*, and that is the reason why men cannot believe. When

they are told, "Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus has everlasting life," they answer, "I wish I could believe, but I cannot." Now, let me ask one who speaks in that fashion. Did you ever go to God with tears and say, "Lord, I have sinned"? Did you ever acknowledge your transgressions to the Lord and acknowledging them, did you then say, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? No, you have not done that and you cannot bring your mind to it. You do not like to make a clean breast of it. Now, he that confesses his sin shall find mercy, but none else. David said, "When I kept silence my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." Moreover, if you do not confess your sin to the Lord, I do not see how you can believe in Christ, because Christ has come to pardon sin, and if you will not confess that you have transgressed, how can you believe in His power to pardon? How can you rightly value forgiveness when you are not awake to the fact that you have offended? The Lord Jesus has come to cleanse you by virtue of His blood. But if you do not need cleansing, or will not acknowledge that you do, I can well understand you when you say, "I cannot believe in Him." It is your hardness of heart. It is your hatred of God. It is your esteem of yourself that hinders.

Many, also, are unable to believe in Jesus Christ because they are *too lazy*. They are slothfully thoughtless and careless. A great many young people, and some older ones too, do not like thinking—it is too much trouble. If you think, some of you women, it is about how that ribbon will suit your complexion. And some of you men, if you think at all, it is only about how you shall get an extra five pound note by your speculations. Thinking is a kind of work which the mass of the present race abhor. They will no more think than butterflies will make honey. They flit from flower to flower, but gather nothing. I know that this is true of multitudes in this country and I confess it was true of myself before the Lord, in mercy, met with me. I did not want to think about sin, death, heaven, and hell. I did not mind hearing a sermon, because that was the proper thing, and one could soon shake off any uneasy impression produced by it. To spend an hour quite alone, to look into another world, to face death, judgment, and eternity—that is very dreary work to you whose main consideration is to kill time and keep yourselves amused. Now, my dear friend, if you are a trifler, indifferent, careless, frivolous, superficial, giddy, forever giggling, not even serious enough to laugh—if life is all surface work with you—I can very well understand why you cannot believe in Jesus Christ. You do not seem to have mind enough, or sense enough, for you degrade yourself into a semi-idiotic state by your frivolity. May God awaken you. This life was given us for something better than to be sported away. It is not all a game of sports or skipping-rope. This life is given you to be followed by another—and that other will be molded by this. What you are here, you will be forever. He that is filthy here will be filthy still. And he that is holy here will be holy still. Mind what you do. The hours you try to get rid of, when you speak of "killing time," will accuse you before God as their murderer and bear blood-red evidence upon

their hands against you. Wake up from such laziness, I charge you, lest you wake up when it will be too late. Already such sluggishness has kept you from believing—it will soon sleep you into hell.

There are some, again, who cannot believe in Jesus Christ because they are very, *very fond of what they call pleasure*. Now, every man is desirous of happiness and is not to be condemned for being so. The human mind was constituted to enjoy pleasure, but it was never created that it might be content with the vanities which nowadays are falsely called pleasures. It makes one blush for the age in which we live when we think of the trifles, light as air, in which our neighbors take delight. Sinful pleasures are a great bar to faith and must be renounced. That evil companion who has charmed you with questionable jests must be given up. Do you say that you cannot quit him? Then I see why you cannot believe in Jesus. That house of unclean amusement which leads to vice—unbelievers know that they must forsake it if they believe in Christ—and they cannot believe because they love the place of temptation. They hesitate. They deliberate. They say that they cannot believe in Jesus, but if they would speak the truth, they mean they cannot give up sweet sin. Sin is such a dainty that they need to roll it under their tongue and relish it once more. They prefer their pleasure to their Savior.

Let me also say there are some who are unable to believe in Jesus Christ *for reasons which I hardly care to utter publicly*, and yet I must do it. I have sometimes had sorrowful proof of the reason why some men have lived in unbelief of Christ. After death, I have heard what it would have been a shame to whisper in the ear of an unsuspecting wife. The man was a respectable merchant in the city. He went into the "best society," but he was keeping a mistress and living in fornication all the while. He said he could not believe in Christ! Do you wonder? How could he? I speak plainly, because these things are very common among your respectable merchants and they need to be told plainly of their sins. Do not come whining to me about *"can't* believe in Jesus Christ." Of course you cannot while you live in filthy lusts.

Some cannot believe, but why is it? Why, about once every two weeks, or perhaps once a month, the bottle gets the upper hand of them. They cannot believe, no, and there is another thing they cannot do, *they cannot walk straight*. They cannot believe, but they could if they would fling that brandy bottle out of the window—the vile drink stands between them and Christ. To show us that they cannot believe, they hunt up some of Tom Paine's blasphemies. And when they get "half seas over" they blubber out their religious difficulties and want us to believe that they are troubled about them. They are only acting a part—they are not honest infidels—they only use skepticism to quiet their consciences, for they know very well that drunkenness is their real master. There are plenty of very respectable people who never have to pay "five shillings and costs," and yet do not go to bed sober as a rule. I mean women as well as men. These, also, cannot believe.

Have I not told some of you why you cannot believe? I will not mince matters with you. You know that what I say is true.

I cannot go into all the sins which separate between men and Christ, but there are some who live for *gain* and therefore cannot believe. They must make money. Their first aim and their last is to make money—and they are making money—but they are making money in a way they would not like to have known. "There are tricks in all trades," they say, as if they would smudge everybody else with their black brush to make themselves seem clean. Now, I do not believe that every tradesman practices dishonesty. I believe there are many who would scorn a trick even if they could win millions thereby. And therefore, it is not fair to blacken our neighbors to excuse ourselves. There are men about who seek gain and will stick at any lie if they can make a profit. They are making "great sacrifices" always—of their customers, I suspect, mainly. They misrepresent their goods and puff them with barefaced lies—the world is full of this rotten trading. Are any of you engaged in such trading? Dare you go to God and say, "Lord, help me to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," and then take down your shutters and cheat people? Why, the Lord will never help you to do anything of the sort. You must give up robbery and lies, for you cannot serve God and Mammon, and God will never help you to do so. There is no promise in the Bible that God will allow a man to remain dishonest and yet be saved. You need to be saved *from* your dishonesty, to be saved *from* your drunkenness, to be saved *from* your injustice. And unless you are saved from these you can by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

May God grant us grace to shake these vipers into the fire, for, O my hearers, though I have spoken sternly, just now, even as John the Baptist might have done, I also am a man and would plead with you tenderly. What sin can be worth indulging at the expense of your soul? Young soldier, over yonder, is there any sin which prevents your being a Christian in your regiment? Can any sin repay you for losing your soul? Young woman, over there, tempted by pleasure, can any gaiety be worth losing heaven? Whether young or old, I ask you, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" I have spoken roughly to you in love—love to your souls. If the whole host of pleasurable sins could be put together and gold piled upon them high as the moon, the whole mass would not repay a man for being cast into the fires of hell. Do not run such risks, I pray you. May great grace enable you to cast your sins away and take Christ at once.

There is one other thing I will mention, which I am persuaded prevents a great many from believing in Christ, and it is this—they complain that they cannot believe that God will forgive such sinners as they are—and they try to make out that it is impossible that their iniquities should be pardoned. I have, on several occasions, discovered that the true reason has been that *they have not forgiven other people*. Now, let us not deceive you. You must forgive everyone his trespasses against you, or your Fa-

ther in heaven will never forgive you. An unforgiving man is an unforgiven man. Let us say that again—An unforgiving man is an unforgiven man. If you take your brother by the throat and say, "Pay me what you owe," you cannot wonder that the great King should be angry and refuse to hear you when you pray unto Him. It is a very dreadful thing when this kind of spirit springs up between relatives, but it does do so. We have known parents who cannot forgive children. And we have known brothers who cannot forgive brothers, so that two of the same family will not speak to each other by the year together. I hope they are not so daring as to come to the communion table in such a temper as that, because they have no right there, certainly. It is not possible for us to be at peace with God if we will not be at peace with one another. May I not have put my finger upon the cause of unbelief in some now present? I know I have.

And now to sum up all in a word. If these are the reasons why you cannot believe in Jesus Christ, are they not reasons which aggravate your sin? You dare not plead any one of them before God. They are reasons which will fail you when you come to die. Remember, they will all be made known at the day of judgment. Every secret sinner here will have to stand forth to be seen as I stand publicly before you now. Yes, and much more so. Every man will be visible to the eyes of the assembled universe—and all his actions will be read out in the face of the sun—and more, his motives will be published, too. Who—who among you but must feel some dread of the great day of judgment? If you are not covered by the righteousness of Christ, how will you endure the revelation of that day? There will be no secrets then. A trumpet voice shall proclaim aloud every hidden thing and the lightning flash of the divine eye shall discover the deeds of darkness. O soul, if you have any of these reasons for not believing, what shall I say to you? Put away such unreasonable reasons. God has given His Son to bleed and die for sinners—all He bids sinners do is to come and trust His Son—and if they will but trust His Son, they are saved. Their transgressions are forgiven the moment they believe in Jesus. They receive a new life and begin a new career. "But," you say, "how am I to know that it is so?" God says it is so. Is not that enough? There are hundreds of us here who have tried and proved the truth of the promise—

"Oh, believe the message true—
God to us His Son has given."

Rest on Him and you shall have the blessings which He came to give to the guilty and the lost. I feel as if I cannot utter what I feel, or feel as I ought to feel, when I look round upon this congregation and remember that there are many here who are refusing Jesus Christ—and that some of them, in a very short time, will be where they will have no more space for believing unto life, but will be shut out forever from all hope. I cannot bear the thought that one among you should then say, "I went to hear the preacher at the Tabernacle one Sabbath evening and he preached to

us about the reasons why we could not believe. But he was so very smooth-tongued and velvet-mouthed that he did not deal with our consciences fairly and honestly." No, sirs. You will not dare to say that. You will not dare to say that. I have spoken plainly to you. What, then, will you say? You will have to admit, "I was plainly warned, but I persisted in not believing in Jesus Christ. I said I *could* not, but the reason was that I would not. I harbored evils in my heart and I refused to get rid of them. And so I could not believe in Christ. I chose my own destruction and now that I have accomplished it, I have no one to blame but myself. Over the roof of that dreadful prison, in which I am shut in forever, I continually read these words, 'You knew your duty, but you did it not. You heard of Jesus, but you rejected Him, and your blood is on your own head.'" God grant it may not be so, but instead thereof, may many of you come to believe in Jesus now. And then we will meet in heaven and praise redeeming grace. Hoping that free grace will make it so, we will sing one of Mr. Sankey's joyful hymns—"Ring the Bells of Heaven"—

"Ring the bells of heaven. There is joy today,
For a soul returning from the wild!
See! The Father meets him out upon the way,
Welcoming His weary wandering child.
Glory! Glory! How the angels sing,
Glory! Glory! How the loud harps ring.
'Tis the ransomed army, like a mighty sea,
Pealing forth the anthem of the free."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 5.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—387, 572, 541.

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THE BLESSINGS OF FOLLOWING ON
NO. 1246

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

"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning, and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."
Hosea 6:3.

I MUST first remove the moldy piece from the text, and that is the word, "if," which has no sort of business here whatever. You notice that the translators put it in italics, to intimate to us that it was no Word of God, but one of their own words which they thought necessary to complete the sense. We might read—and we should, to be far nearer the sense—"Then shall we know *when* we follow on to know the Lord." Or, perhaps, better still, "We *shall* know: we *shall* follow on to know the Lord," for there is no trace of question in the matter, and no indication of an "if." We will cut out man's "if," and then take the text as it should have been—"Then shall we know *when* we follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning."

I continually hear it said concerning those who have been converted, or profess to have been converted of late, "We hope they will hold on." I wish people would speak what they mean and not veil their speech, for the plain English of that expression frequently is, "We do not believe that they will hold on." "We *hope* they will," means, "We do not expect it." One thing is quite certain, however—those who are truly converted to God can be safely left in God's hands. If they have, indeed, believed in Jesus Christ—in Jesus only, with all their hearts—their salvation is as sure as if they were already within the gates of paradise. The Redeemer will not suffer any soul to perish trusting in Him—

"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep,
All that His heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep.
Nor death, nor hell, shall ever remove
His favorites from His breast,
In the dear bosom of His love
They must forever rest."

Question whether it is a work of grace if you will, though I would much rather the questioning spirit were laid aside. But if it is the Lord's work, it will stand, for neither time nor eternity, nor life nor death, shall ever cast down that which divine omnipotence builds up. Jehovah puts not His hands to a work which shall ultimately crumble into nothingness.

My dear young friends, if you have believed in Jesus and are tormented by these quibblers, with their pretended hopes as to your holding on, I

beseech you, be in earnest to disappoint the fears of your friends and the expectations of your foes, by living near to God, by asking for persevering grace, by watching carefully every step you take, and by guarding jealously, by the aid of the blessed Spirit, your own hearts in private, lest by any means the enemy get an advantage over you. Let it be the great object of your ambition that you may hold on and hold out to the end—and so prove that the Lord has, indeed, looked upon you with an eye of love. There is a sweet verse in one of our hymns which I commend to you who are beginners in the divine life—

"We have no fear that You should lose
One whom eternal love could choose;
But we would never that grace abuse,
Let us not fall, let us not fall."

The first part of the text meets all doubts about perseverance in divine grace and the second comforts souls distressed for another reason. While some young Christians are troubled about whether they shall hold on, others are very much exercised because of the slenderness of their knowledge. They compare themselves with older Christians and they say, "How can I be a child of God when I know so little?" They even contrast themselves with their teachers and because they, as they might naturally expect, are somewhat behind them, they conclude that surely they cannot have been taught of God at all. I beseech these friends to remember that the green blade has not the ripeness of the full ear, nor can it expect to have as yet—that the child has not the experience nor the strength of the man, nor can he expect to have as yet—that the early morning has not the warmth of noon, nor can we expect it should have. It has its own peculiar beauties, though it has not yet the full glory of meridian splendor. There is a growth in the divine life. You do not know what you shall know, you are not what you shall be, you have not yet what you shall have, you do not enjoy what you shall enjoy. But these are among the things to come which are yours. I begin, therefore, the handling of my text with this double remark—let not the fears of some that you will not hold on disturb you, rather let them excite you to lean more fully upon Christ. And let not your own consciousness of ignorance depress you—let that also lead you nearer to the Savior, who alone teaches us to profit.

In our text, there are three points. The first is, *our business*—"Follow on to know." The second is, *God's promise*—"Then shall you know." And the third is, *the modes by which this promise is fulfilled*—"His going forth is prepared as the morning, and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

I. First, then, here is OUR BUSINESS. It is *to follow on to know the Lord*.

And that implies, first, that *we begin with knowing the Lord*. You cannot follow on with that which you have not commenced. There is a religiousness which contains in it no knowledge of God whatever. Beware of it. The religion which consists only in the knowledge of outward rites and ceremonies, or the knowledge of orthodoxies, the knowledge of doctrinal

distinctions, the knowledge of religious language and brogues and experiences or the knowledge of popular hymns—that religion is vain. There must be knowledge of God. And, mark you, if you know God, you will think very little of yourself. He who knows not God thinks man a noble being—he who has seen God thinks man to be dust and ashes. He who knows not God's holiness thinks himself to be a good creature, but when he sees a thrice-holy God he says, "I abhor myself." He who knows not God thinks man to be a wonderful being, able to accomplish whatever he wills. But in the sight of God, human strength is burned up and man becomes lighter than vanity. Do you know God? O my dear hearer, do you know God in the majesty of His justice as condemning your sin and you for sin? Do you know God in the splendor of His love, as giving Jesus Christ to die for sinners, blending that love with justice—for love gave Jesus and justice slew Him? Do you know God in the fullness of His power to save, renewing the heart, changing the mind, subduing the will? Do you know Him even in this which is comparatively a slender branch of knowledge? If you do, you have begun to know Him and you have begun to know yourself, too, for he knows not himself who does not know something of God. Oh, to know the Father as my Father, who has kissed me and put the best robe upon me. Oh, to know the Son as my brother, in whose garments I am accepted and stand comely in the sight of God! Oh, to know the Spirit as the quickener and the divine indweller and illuminator, by whose light alone we see and in whose life we live! To know the Lord—that is true religion. And I say again, any religion, whatever it is—Churchianity or Nonconformity, or whatever you like—if it does not lead you to know God, it is of no use whatever. The knowledge of God is the basis of all saving experience. "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." "Acquaint yourself, now, with Him and be at peace." This is the one great business of human life—to know the Lord.

And next, our business is to *advance in this knowledge*. We must shut out of our minds all ideas that we fully know the Lord, for the text says "*Then* shall we know when we follow on to know." Now a man will never follow on if he judges that he has reached the end. If he comes to the conclusion, "I know the Lord. I know all about Him. I know all that is knowable"—that man will not follow on and therefore, I am afraid that he will never know the Lord at all. I trembled for a very beloved brother the other day when I heard that he had declared that he could not sing, "Nearer my God to Thee," for he was already as near to God as it was possible to be. Brethren, my soul feels a horror creeping over it when such expressions are used. And more so when they fall from those I love. I know nothing about such talk as that—it seems to me to be sheer vanity. I think I know the Lord—no, I know that I know Him. I have been favored with His presence and have enjoyed a very clear sense of my acceptance in the Beloved, but to suppose that I know all that is to be known, or that I possess in myself all the holiness that a creature can attain this side of the grave, is as far from me as the east is from the west. I growingly feel my unworthiness—I sink lower and lower in my own

judgement. I *was* nothing and now I *am* less than nothing. I do not know the Lord as I hope to know Him. I would have you remember that the apostle Paul said that he desired to know Christ. If you look at the Epistle to the Philippians, which contains that wish, you will find that it was written by Paul at least 20 years after he had been converted. He had enjoyed 20 years of walking very near to God and of very marvelous revelations—20 years of very successful working for God, such as perhaps were never accorded to any other man—and yet he still aspires, "That I *may* know Him." What? Paul, do you not know Him? "Oh, yes," he would reply, "I know Him so sweetly, so blessedly, but I would wish to know Him better still. The more I know Him, the more I find there is yet to be known. He is such a deep of love. He is such a mountain of mercy that as I dive deeper, a further deep opens up to me. And as I climb higher, a loftier peak towers above me." Dear hearer, if you think you can never be better than you are, I do not think you ever will be. Self-contentment is the end of progress. When you have attained, why, what remains for you but to rest and be thankful, and do a little pious boasting? I do not believe you if you say you have got to the ultimatum. As long as you are this side of heaven, there will be room for progress and something yet beyond you after which you will labor. "Then shall we know when we follow on to know." You will still have to press forward and the exhortation will still sound in your ears—

"Forget the steps already trod,
And onward urge your way."

Not as though you had already attained, either were already perfect, this one thing you do, forgetting the things that are behind, press forward, still looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith. Our business, then, is to begin with the knowledge of God, to press forward in the knowledge of God, and not to flatter ourselves into the idea that we have no more to learn.

Another thought. Our business is to *continue in what we know*. There are some persons who are everything by turns and nothing long. They say that they have begun to know the Lord in the right way, but very soon you find them following another route. A tree which is often transplanted is not likely to bring forth much fruit. The vessel which changes its course because its captain is full of caprice is not likely to make headway to any desired haven. Brethren, in whatever you have attained, mind the same thing—rush not after novelties, as certain vagrant bands in this city are always doing. If you have begun in the Spirit, do not hope to be made perfect in the flesh. If all that you have already known concerning your Lord has come to you by faith, do not expect the rest of it to come by feeling. Some Christians seem to live by jerks. They live as bankrupt sinners, dependent upon the mercy of God—and then they get encouraged, and set up to live as saints rolling in riches of realized sanctification. But before long they are insolvent again, and no wonder, for this sort of paper money generally leads to a collapse. Keep to the one point—"I am nothing. Christ is everything. I am sin. He is my righteous-

ness. I am death. He is my life. I look to Him for everything. I trust not in excitement or feeling, or attainments, or graces, or works—I rely on Jesus only." Brother, that is the right clue to follow. Follow on. Turn not to the right hand or to the left. Your hope of knowing more of divine things must lie in your persevering in this course.

But take care that you *persevere eagerly*. I find the Hebrew here is strong enough to bear to be translated, "Then shall you know if you eagerly follow on to know the Lord." The knowledge of God is not to be attained, certainly no great proficiency in it is to be attained, without an intense desire. Even to obtain human knowledge, a man separates himself and engages in much study, which is "a weariness of the flesh." If we would know God, it will not be by trifling over His Word, nor by neglecting the assembling of ourselves together, nor by slighting the mercy seat, or neglecting private meditation. There must be a keen scent and an eager pursuit, as when the hound pursues the stag, for we cannot know much of God so as to feel His going forth as the morning and His refreshing as the dew, except our heart thirsts after God as the hart thirsts for the water brooks. Let me urge you, newly-converted ones, to be very diligent in searching the Word of God. Be much in attendance upon the means of grace, but especially be much with God privately, holding personal communion alone with God. You may learn something of a person by reading his books. You may get a better idea of him by hearing him speak. But if you want to know him best, you must live with him. Even so, you may know much of God from His Word and much from the speech of His servants. But if you want to really know Him, you must abide with Him in habitual communion. I urge this upon you—then shall you know when in this manner you follow on to know the Lord.

Once more. Our business is *to be receptive*. If we are to know the Lord we must follow on to know the Lord by *being willing to learn*. Notice that the text says, "He shall come unto us as the rain." Now, the earth drinks in the rain. That portion of the soil which repels the rain—the rock, which turns it off from its surface—cannot be blessed thereby. It is a great blessing to have a soul capable of receiving divine truth. Alas! There are some who have heard the gospel so long that they have almost become grace-resistant. I have seen a new tent, when a shower has come on, let in the wet in a hundred places. But, after a while, when the canvas has been well swollen with the rain, it has become waterproof and not a drop has come through. Certain hearers seem to be so saturated with the rain of the Word that they are gospel-proof. The heavenly moisture does not penetrate them. They hear, but hear in vain—insensible as steel. Open your breasts to Christ whenever He comes. Let the gates of your heart be set wide open that He may enter. Let him not knock, and knock, and knock again in vain. When Jesus of Nazareth passes by, let Him see that there is an open door to your house, so that if today He must abide in your house, He may come in and welcome. The Lord opens the door of our hearts like that of Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened." Prejudice often shuts out the Word—some people do not know the Lord,

or much about Him, because they do not want to know. Certain points of God's truth would disturb what they call their, "settled views," and therefore they wear blinkers for fear of seeing too much. Happy is that man who wants to find truth wherever it may be and is glad to discover and amend his errors, because his heart is set upon being right before the Lord. He longs to follow the Lord fully, as Caleb did of old.

Here then, beloved, is our business. May grace be given to us to attend to it—to know the Lord to begin with, to exclude all idea that there is nothing further to know, to continue in what is known, to persevere eagerly in the endeavor to know more—and to daily be receptive of divine influences.

II. Now, secondly, we have GOD'S PROMISE—"Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord." You shall know, young friend. God says that you shall know. What will you know? Why, you will know when you follow on to know the Lord *more about the past*. Take the text in its connection. You observe that it details the experience—the very perplexing experience—of a quickened soul. "He has torn and He will heal; He has smitten and He will heal us up; after two days He will revive us," and so on. Now, you do not know, perhaps, at this time, what your present experience means. You thought that as soon as you believed in Jesus you would have perfect peace and joy—and that your delight would never depart from you. You have heard others sing, "Oh, happy days," and you have sung it yourself. But just now, you do not feel at all as happy as you hoped to be. On the contrary, you feel very miserable because you have found out that the devil is not dead—and that your sins are not dead—and that outside in the world, people do not look upon you with any greater love because you are a Christian. In fact, on the contrary, they oppose you. Some of your dearest relatives even scoff at you for loving the name of Jesus. And you are a good deal staggered by their opposition. Besides, you do not enjoy prayer as you did at first and the Bible itself scarcely seems to glitter before your eyes as in your first love. And even the sermons, which seemed to be so very sweet, appear somehow to have become sharp and cutting to you. Well, you will understand all this by-and-by. When we are very little, our mothers carry us in their arms. But when we get a little bigger, they set us on our own feet. It is natural that the child that has to walk alone should, when weary, regret that the time is over when it lay so closely in its mother's bosom. Yet it is good for the babe to try its own feet—good for it to tumble down and know its own weakness—or else it might always be helpless. Many things in the beginning of Christian life are very pleasant and delightful, but trials come in due time to exercise our graces that we may be no longer children. We do not understand this at the time and to the raw recruit, I would say, do not wish to understand it now. You shall understand it when you follow on to know the Lord. Leave your experience to God. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and hang on to that—and when you cannot comprehend your own feelings, and your religion all seems to be in a tangle, never mind—hold on to the cross and sing—

"I, the chief of sinners, am,
But Jesus died for me."

Stand to that. Rest in the precious blood once shed for many for the remission of sins and, by-and-by, you shall know all about the winding experiences through which you are now going. Then shall you know when you follow on to know the Lord.

Beloved, the text means not only that we shall know about the past, but as we follow on to know the Lord, *we shall know in the present the sweet things of the gospel* and the enjoyments which are stored up for the Lord's people. "Eye has not seen, neither has ear heard, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him; but He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God." You will not know the choice things which God has prepared for His people except as, by degrees, the Spirit of God reveals them to you. Press on to know more of God. I know it sometimes puzzles you to hear us talk of election. You cannot quite understand the doctrine of eternal love which had no beginning and never shall have an end—of immutable love which neither shifts nor changes, of vital union to Christ—justification through imputed righteousness, and the like. Very well, we will not trouble you with high sounding terms and theological phrases. But as you follow on to know the Lord, you will know the deep things of God. Continue to follow on to know more about Christ. Stick to the one desire—to know more about *Him*—and you will find your way through difficulties. As in a maze, if you follow the clue, you will get to the center of it. Christ is the clue to all gospel mysteries—follow that silken clue stained with scarlet and you will arrive at all those precious truths of God one by one, and have the present enjoyment of them as God shall see that you are able to bear them. He deals with us in much prudence and according as our strength is so does He reveal these choice things to us. "You cannot bear them now," said Christ concerning certain truths which He would gladly have taught to His disciples. So you beginners cannot bear the higher doctrines, now, and if we were to preach them to you we should stagger you, but you will bear them soon. No, you will love them soon and whereas they may seem bugbears to you tonight, the day shall come when you shall bless God that ever He revealed them in Scripture and you will be prepared to die in defense of them.

Beloved Christian friends, those of you who have gone to greater lengths than others in divine knowledge may well take this promise to yourselves *as to the future*—"Then shall we know when we follow on to know the Lord." We know something of our Lord's love and faithfulness, and truth and power to save. We know the covenant of grace and we have seen something of its lengths and breadths and depths and heights. But we are conscious that we have no more fully understood the boundless love and grace than the child who takes up a handful of water from the sea has held the Atlantic in his palm. But we shall know, we shall know. We shall know more and more and more, and especially we shall know more as we get nearer to heaven. That land Beulah teaches very

much. Saints grow speedily wise in that region where the angels bring bundles of spices from the other side of the river—and stray notes from the harps of angels are borne on favoring breezes to the blessed ears of God's beloved ones who are waiting to be called away. We shall know. All that has been revealed to the saints shall be revealed to us when we follow on to know the Lord. Their rapturous enjoyments when they have been overcome with divine love—we shall drink of those wines on the lees, well refined. Their confident assurance when they were as certain of their interest in divine love as of their own existence—we shall climb to that and stand upon our high places, too. "Then shall we know when we follow on to know the Lord." Oh, brethren and sisters, can you guess what yet is to be revealed to you? Could you have imagined at the outset of the Christian life that you would, or could have had such confidence and rest and peace as you have now? I ask those of you who have had many trials and have been rooted and established in the faith—could you have thought it possible that you would have had such a grip and hold on Christ as you now have? Perhaps you were, for many years, under a misty, cloudy ministry—and yourselves in a sort of semi-darkness, "not light, but darkness visible"—but the Lord has brought you out to see all things finished in Christ and to understand the covenant of grace. Oh, what brightness is before you now! But—but the day comes, even before you get to heaven, when the light of this day shall be as dimness compared with what you shall behold, for the light of one day shall then be as the light of several days, if you press forward in this knowledge as God shall help you. There are ascending rungs in the ladder of grace and stages each one above the other in the divine climbing. The mount of the Lord is very high—he who stands even at the base is saved—but there are higher platforms and we ascend first to one and then to another. And from the elevations, gradually rising, the scene widens and the air grows clearer. Oh, to be higher, higher, higher and so near to light, nearer to perfection, nearer to God. Press on, O climber and you shall find that you shall know more and more of the Lord as you press towards Him.

III. The third and last point is THE FULFILMENT OF THIS PROMISE. I will not be very long over the two figures lest I should weary you, but they are both very suggestive.

"*His going forth is prepared as the morning.*" That is to say, press on to know the Lord and you shall know the Lord more fully in the light and heat which He brings to men. The going forth of the morning is *peculiarly bright* because it stands in contrast with the night. There are countries in which the night suddenly gives place to the morning. Here we have long intervals of twilight, but in those lands, after the eye has been in darkness all night, the sun suddenly seems to leap above the horizon and there is light. Now, it has been so with you, already, who know the Lord, and it shall be more and more so with you. The contrast between your sorrow and your joy shall be very striking. As your tribulations abound, so also shall your consolations abound. Your broken bones shall rejoice. The place of your weeping, the valley of Achor, shall be the door of your

hope. Now be joyous about this. Follow on to know the Lord and there shall be light for you—light out of darkness—your midnight shall blaze into day. The Lord will come as the morning as to His *freshness*, for every morning is a new morning. No second-hand morning has ever dawned upon the earth yet. The dawn is always fresh with the sweet breath of the zephyrs and bright with the sparkling dews which hang like new jewels in the ears of nature. The light is always as of newly minted gold and the air is as perfume fresh pressed from its spices. All the earth seems like a newly married bride in the early morning. Well now, such shall you find true religion to be as you press forward—it will always be fresh for you—never flat and stale. I have wearied of a thousand things, but never of my Lord. Ask the saints whether they ever wearied of the sight of Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness who rises with healing beneath His wings. It is said of our Lord in "the Song" that His locks are black as a raven, that is to say, He is always young. Truly He wears the dew of His youth to our hearts. Never does our Lord grow old. Though He is so ancient that His locks are white as snow, yet He is still so new and fresh that the raven's plume has not more joy. You shall find it so as you press forward, joy shall be given to you—and that joy shall be forever new.

This blessing shall come *irresistibly*, for when the morning comes to the earth, none can stop it. Can any human hand seize the reins of the horses of the sun and restrain them from passing through the gates of the morning? Impossible! God bids the sun rise and rise he does. So with you Christians, abiding in the knowledge of God and pressing forward, the light must come to you. Nothing can prevent it. The sun rejoices to run his race and defies all competitors. And even so shall the Lord your Redeemer scorn all who would restrain Him and come to you in the fullness of His love.

The blessing shall come *increasingly* too, for the morning awakes at first with a few gray streaks. Then follow the redder hues which stain the sky, as though night in retreating hung out the banners of defeat. And soon succeed the brighter tints and then the sun himself is seen above the mountain's height and all the earth is robed in splendor. So with your soul. At first there is a little light, then more, and more, and more till you come unto the perfect day and see Jehovah face to face and fear no ill. His coming forth shall be prepared as the morning. The text says, "*is prepared* as the morning." I find that the word may be read, "is decreed"—determined, fixed, appointed, prepared. Christ's coming to gladden your soul, O you that know the Lord, is a fixed thing. It is not a perhaps, but is determined of God. You must have it. It is a decree as powerful as that fiat which said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And therefore the blessing must come to you. It should be no small joy to the believer in God through Jesus Christ that the mercies he is to enjoy are measured out, fixed, and determined by an unalterable will which has been framed of old by eternal love and infinite wisdom. Follow on to know the Lord and if all the devils in hell try to keep you in the dark, they cannot, the sun must rise for you. Follow on to know the Lord and if all ap-

parent providences should seem to keep you back, they cannot, for the secret and omnipotent decrees which rule the providences shall carry the point. His going forth is prepared as the morning—and that going forth shall be for your joy and delight.

The second figure of the text has less to do with the light of the knowledge of Christ, and more to do with the inward power which comes of that knowledge. "*He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.*" This is the inward power. Dwell upon those words, "*unto us*"—not only, "shall He come as the rain," but "shall come *unto* us." I rejoice to feel the gospel come home to me. It is very sweet to preach it, but when I get to hear it for myself, and it comes *unto me*, then I know its power to refresh my soul. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ has a way of coming unto us which is as the rain when it waters the earth. The earth is dry and dusty, parched, barren. The rain does not ask the earth for anything, but it looks down from the heights and sees the gaping mouths of the parched fields and the clods crumbling as they lie baking in the cruel sun, and the rain says, "I will go and bless that field." And down it comes, drop after drop, in plenteous refreshment. Each drop finds its way, until the rain enters the crevices and descends into the bosom of Mother Earth and the field is refreshed, the hidden seeds start up to life, and the green blades take another shoot. Now, follow on to know the Lord, beloved, and you shall find the Lord Jesus Christ not only giving you more light and knowledge like the sun, but giving you more life within yourself, more sap of divine grace, more vigor within your own soul so that you shall become fruitful and shall grow to perfection. As you drink in the rain of grace from heaven, you shall yield back to heaven the fruits of righteousness to the honor and glory of God.

Observe that it is written, "He shall come unto us *as the rain, as the latter and the former rain.*" Now, these come in their season. The former rain came in Palestine at the end of autumn, when they had sown the corn. The latter rain came at the beginning of our spring, when corn in the east is getting nearly ripe. It is not so with us, of course, but it is so in Palestine. The latter rain came to plump out the ears. Now, God will give you grace when you need it, grace to help in time of need. A shower when you begin and another shower when you go on, and perhaps the heaviest shower just as you are ripening. Do not be frightened when you see a cloud of trouble. If we were to expect rain without clouds we should be very great fools. I sometimes think that to expect a shower of blessing without trial is almost as great a folly—

"You fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head."

God knows how to send a shower of rain when it is needed and to send grace when it is needed—to give us the former rain and the latter rain in their season.

Notice, again, it is a *repeated* gift. He shall give the former rain and the latter rain. If you have had grace once, the Lord has more for you. Did you have happy times when old Dr. So-and-So was your pastor? Well, the doctor is dead, but God is not. Were you very much delighted when you used to sit in such-and-such a church, in years gone by, but have you moved into the country now? Yes, but God has not moved. He is in the country as well as in the town. You tell me you had such happy times when you were young. Yes, but God is neither younger nor older. Go to Him, for He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Do you suppose that because He gave you the former rain, He has emptied the bottles of heaven? It is not so. The clouds, "those wandering cisterns of the sky," fill again and empty again, and fill again and empty again—and so is it with the mighty grace of God. There is an exhaustless fullness in the Lord—however much you have had from Him you shall have more. Follow on to know the Lord and you shall have grace upon grace. The showers shall never cease to fall till you get to the land where you shall be as a tree planted by the rivers of water and shall drink in unfailing supplies from the river itself.

One word more only and it is this—all this fulfillment of the promise that you shall know comes only to you through the Lord Himself. If we are to know, it must be by *His going forth* and because *He* shall come unto us. There is no knowing in any other way. Oh, my brethren, I know that your desire is like mine—to know more of the Lord by that deep, vital, practical knowledge which makes the soul like the God it knows. Never let us forget that our only way of knowing the Lord is through His coming to us. We may read the Bible—I trust we shall—but there is such a thing as resting in Bible reading and if we do so we shall fall short. Our Lord denounced that in His day when He said, "You search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. And you will not come to Me that you might have life." As much as if He had said, "Your searching the Scriptures is well enough, but coming to Me is the main business." It is not the letter-God, but the living God that we need. It is not the book of God so much as the God of the book that we must know. We must seek Christ Jesus, the personal Christ, really existent to ourselves. And falling at His feet, confessing our sins, looking up to His wounds, trusting and confiding in Him, we shall be indeed blessed. You cannot know the Lord in any other way than by His coming to you in the reality of His incarnation as the very Christ of God. I wish I knew how to put the matter so that everyone here would recognize to the full my meaning. You know the moment people begin to think about religion they say, "Well, yes, we must keep the Sabbath. We must attend a place of worship. We must have family prayer." Thus they dwell upon the many things that they "must do," all of which things are right enough, but they are only the shell. What the sinner has to say is not, "I will arise and go—to church." No, no. "I will arise and go to my closet and pray." No, that is not the first thing. "I will arise and go and read a chapter of the Bible." No, that is not it, good as that is.

But, "I will arise and go *unto my Father*." That is where you have to go—to a real God. "How can I go?" Well, not with these feet, but He is not far from any one of you. In Him you live and move and have your being—you are also His offspring. Let your hearts think of Him now. Let your hearts mourn that you have broken His law. Let your hearts listen to His gracious words, for He says, "Return unto Me, and I will return unto you. 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." No turn will do but a turning unto the Lord. No new birth, but a birth by His Spirit.

If you do not know the Lord, remember that He has revealed Himself very clearly in the person of His only-begotten Son, who took our nature and died in the place of His people upon the cross. Whoever looks to Jesus, the man, believing Him to be the Son of God, sees all of God that He needs to see in the person of the crucified Redeemer. Look to Him, however weak and feeble your eyes may be. Trust Him, trust Him fully, trust Him only, trust Him now. God enable you to do so by His ever-blessed Spirit and you are saved. You know the Lord, and as you go on to know more about Him, you shall find Him to be as the sun in his brightness, and as the rain in its sweetness and life. God bless you. May we all meet in heaven, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hosea 6.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—605, 670, 673.

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THE SPECIAL PRAYER MEETING
NO. 1247

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 20, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"When he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying."
Acts 12:12.

IT was a great wonder that the infant church of Christ was not destroyed. Truly, she was like a lone lamb in the midst of furious wolves, without earthly power, prestige, or patronage to protect her, yet as though she wore a charmed life, she escaped from the hosts of her cruel foes. Had not this child been something more than others, it had been slain like the innocents at Bethlehem—but being heaven-born it escaped the fury of the destroyer. It is worthwhile asking; however, with what weapons did this church protect herself; for *we* may very wisely use the same! She was preserved in her utmost danger from overwhelming destruction—what was her defense? Where did she find shield and buckler? The answer is—in prayer—"Many were gathered together praying." Whatever may be the danger of the times, and each age has its own peculiar hazard, we may rest in calm assurance that our defense is of God and we may avail ourselves of that defense in the same manner as the early church did, namely, by abounding in prayer. However poisonous the viper, prayer can extract its sting. However fierce the lion, prayer can break its teeth. However terrible the fire, prayer can quench the violence of the flame. But this is not all—the new-born church not only escaped, but it multiplied. From being as a grain of mustard seed, when it could all assemble in the upper room, it has now become a great tree. Lo, it covers the nations. The birds of the air, in flocks, find shelter in its branches. Why this wondrous increase? What made it grow? Outward circumstances were unfavorable to its progress—upon what nourishment has it been fed? What means were taken with this tender shoot that has been so speedily developed? Whatever means were used of old, we may wisely use them today, also, to strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die, and to develop that which is hopeful in our midst. The answer is—the fact that on all occasions, "Many were gathered together praying." While praying, the Spirit of God came down upon them. While praying, the Spirit often separated this man and that for special work. While praying, their hearts grew warm with inward fire. While praying, their tongues were unloosed and they went forth to speak to the people. And while praying, the Lord opened to them the treasures of His grace. By prayer, they were protected and by prayer, they grew. If our churches are

to live and grow, they must be watered from the same source. "Let us pray," is one of the most necessary watchwords which I can suggest to Christian men and women, for if we will but pray, prayer will fill up the pools in the valley of Baca, yes, and open to us all the channels of that river of God which is full of water, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God.

We have heard a great deal of talk in certain sections of the church about going back to primitive times. They are introducing to us all sorts of superstitious inventions, under cover of the customs of the early church. The plea is cunningly chosen, for primitive practices have great weight with true Christians. But the weak point of the argument is that, unfortunately, what they call the early church is not early enough. If we must have the early church held up as a model, let us have the earliest church of all. If we are to have fathers, let us go back to Apostolic Fathers. And if we are to have ritual, rule, and ceremonies modeled on strict precedent, let us go back to the original precedent recorded in the Holy Scriptures. We, who are called Baptists, have not the slightest objection to go back in everything to the apostolic habit and practice—we reverence the real primitive method and desire to follow the customs of the true early church. And if we could see every ordinance restored to the exact mode in which it was practiced by the saints immediately after the ascension of our Lord and during apostolic times, we would clap our hands with delight; 'tis a consummation devoutly to be wished. To see the early church alive, again, would cause us unfeigned satisfaction. Especially upon this point would we imitate the early church—we would have it said of us—"Many were gathered together praying." May we have much prayer, much household prayer, much believing prayer, and much prevalent prayer—and then we shall obtain great blessings from the Lord.

I. This morning my earnest desire is to stir up the church of Jesus Christ to increased prayerfulness. I have taken this text, as it furnishes me with one or two points of great interest and is full of practical suggestions. The first is this, LET US NOTICE THE IMPORTANCE WHICH THE EARLY CHURCH ATTRIBUTED TO PRAYER and to prayer meetings. Let this be a *lesson* to us. As soon as we begin to read in Acts, and continually as we read on in that record, we note that meetings for prayer had become *a standing institution in the church*. We read nothing of "masses," but we read much of prayer meetings. We hear nothing of church festivals, but we read often of meeting together for prayer. It is said that Peter considered the thing—I fancy that he considered it all round, and thought, "Where shall I go?" And he remembered that it was prayer meeting night down at John Mark's mother's house—and there he would go because he felt that there he should meet with true brethren. In those days, they did things by plan and order, according to that text, "Let all things be done decently and in order," and I have no doubt that it had been duly arranged that the meeting should be held that evening at the house of John Mark's mother. Therefore Peter went there and found, as

he probably expected, that there was a prayer meeting going on. They were not met to hear a sermon. It is most proper that we should very frequently assemble for that purpose, but this was distinctly a meeting where, "Many were gathered together praying." Praying was the business on hand. I do not know that they even had an address, though some will come to the prayer meeting if the pastor is present to speak. But you see James, who is generally thought to have been pastor of the church at Jerusalem, was not there, for Peter said, "Go show these things to James," and most probably none of the apostles were there, because Peter added, "and to the brethren," and I suppose by that he meant the brethren of the apostolic college. The eminent speaking brethren seem to have been all away and perhaps, no one expounded or exhorted that night, nor was there any need, for they were all too much engrossed in common intercession. The meeting was convened for praying, and this, I say, was a regular institution of the Christian church and ought always to be kept up. There should be meetings wholly devoted to prayer. There is a serious flaw in the arrangements of a church when such gatherings are omitted or placed in a secondary position. These prayer meetings should be kept to their objective—and their great attraction should be prayer itself. An address if you like. A few burning words to stir up prayer if you like. But if you cannot have them, do not look upon speech-making as at all necessary. Let it be a standing ordinance in the church that at certain times and occasions many shall meet together to pray, and supplication shall be their only objective. The private Christian will read, hear and meditate, but none of these can be a substitute for prayer. The same truth holds good upon the larger scale—the church should listen to her teachers and receive edification from gospel ordinances—but she must also pray. Nothing can compensate for the neglect of devotion.

It appears, however, that while prayer meetings were a regular institution, the *prayer was sometimes made special*, for we read that prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God "for him," that is, for Peter. It adds greatly to the interest and not a little to the fervency of prayer when there is some great object to pray for. The brethren would have prayed if Peter had been out of prison, but seeing that he was in prison, and likely to be put to death, it was announced that the prayer meeting would be especially to pray for Peter, that the Lord would deliver His servant, or give him grace to die triumphantly. And this special subject gave enthusiasm to the assembly. Yes, they prayed fervently, for I find the margin of the fifth verse runs thus, "Instant and earnest prayer was made of the church for him." They prized the man, for they saw what wonders God had worked by his ministry and they could not let him die, if prayer would save him. When they thought of Peter and how his bleeding head might be exhibited to the populace on the morrow, they prayed heart and soul; and each succeeding intercessor threw more and more fervency into his pleading. The united cry went up to heaven, "Lord, spare Peter." I think I can hear their sobs and cries even now. God grant that our churches may often turn their regular prayer meetings into

gatherings with a special objective, for then they will become more real. Why not pray for a certain missionary, or some chosen district, or class of persons, or order of agencies? We should do well to turn the grand artillery of supplication against some special point of the enemy's walls.

It is clear that these friends *fully believed that there was power in prayer,* for, Peter being in prison, they did not meet together to arrange a plan for getting him out. Some wise brother might have suggested the bribing of the guards and another might have suggested something else. But they had done with planning and betook themselves to praying. I do not find that they met to petition Herod. It would have been of no use to ask that monster to relent—they might as well request a wolf to release a lamb which he has seized. No, the petitions were to Herod's Lord and Master, to the great invisible God. It looked as if they could do nothing, but they felt they could do everything by prayer. They thought little of the fact that 16 soldiers had him in charge. What are 16 guards? If there had been 16,000 soldiers, these believing men and women would still have prayed Peter out. They believed in God, that He would do wonders. They believed in prayer, that it had an influence with God and that the Lord listened to the believing petitions of His servants. They met together for prayer in no dubious mood. They knew what they were doing and had no question as to the power which lay in supplication. Oh, let it never be insinuated in the Christian church that prayer is a good thing and a useful exercise to ourselves, but that it would be superstition to suppose that it affects the mind of God. Those who say this have foolishly thought to please us by allowing us their scientific toleration to go on with our devotions, but do they think we are idiots, that we would continue asking for what we knew we should not receive? That we would keep on praying if it would be of no more use than whistling to the winds? They must think us devoid of reason if they imagine that we shall be able to keep up prayer as a pious exercise if we once concede that it can have no result with God. As surely as any law of nature can be ascertained and proven, we know both by observation and experiment that God assuredly hears prayer and instead of its being a doubtful agency, we maintain prayer to be the most potent and unfailing force beneath the skies. We say in the proverb, "Man proposes but God disposes," and here is the power of prayer, that it does not dally with the proposer but goes at once to the Disposer and deals with the First Cause. Prayer moves that arm which moves all things. O brethren, may we gather power in prayer by having faith in it. Let us not say, "What can prayer do?" but, "What cannot it do?" for all things are possible to him that believes. No wonder prayer meetings flag, if faith in prayer is weak. And no wonder if conversions and revivals are scarce where intercession is neglected.

This prayer in the early church, we remark, in the next place, was *industriously continued*. As soon as Herod had put Peter into prison, the church began to pray. Herod took care that the guards should be sufficient in number to keep good watch over his victim, but the saints of God set their watches, too. As in times of war, when two armies lie near each

other, they both set their sentries, so in this case Herod had his sentries of the night to keep the watch, and the church had its pickets, too. Prayer was made of the church without ceasing—as soon as one little company were compelled to separate to go to their daily labor, they were relieved by another company—and when some were forced to take rest in sleep, others were ready to take up the blessed work of supplication. Thus both sides were on the alert and the guards were changed both by day and by night. It was not hard to foresee which side would win the victory, for truly, except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain. And when, instead of helping to keep the castle, God sends angels to open doors and gates, then we may be sure that the watchmen will wake in vain, or fall into a dead slumber. Continually, therefore, the people of God pleaded at His mercy seat. Relays of petitioners appeared before the throne. Some mercies are not given to us except in answer to persistent prayer. There are blessings which, like ripe fruit, drop into your hands the moment you touch the bough. But there are others which require you to shake the tree again and again, until you make it rock with the vehemence of your exercise, for then only will the fruit fall down. My brethren, we must cultivate persistence in prayer. While the sun is shining and when the sun has gone down, still should prayer be kept up and fed with fresh fuel, so that it burns fiercely and flames on high like a beacon fire blazing towards heaven.

I would fain pause here a minute and urge my dear brethren to attach as much importance to prayer as the early church did. You cannot think too much of it. Believing prayer, dictated of the Spirit and presented through Jesus Christ, is today the power of the church, and we cannot do without it. Some look at her active agencies and prize them, and they suppose that prayer might be dispensed with. You have seen the threshing machine going along the country road from farm to farm. In front there is a huge, black engine which toils along the road. And then behind, you see the machine which actually does the threshing. A novice might say, "I will hire the threshing machine, but I do not want your engine. That is an expensive affair, which consumes coal and makes smoke. I do not require it. I will have the machine which actually does the work, but I do not need the engine." Such a remark would be absurd, for of what use would the machine be to you if the motive power were gone? Prayer in the church is the steam engine which makes the wheels revolve and really does the work. Therefore, we cannot do without it. Suppose a foreman were employed by some great builder and sent out to manage works at a distance. He has to pay the men their wages weekly and he is very diligent in doing so. He neglects none of his duty towards the men, but he forgets to communicate with headquarters—he neither writes to his employer, nor goes to the bank for cash to go on with. Is this wise? When the next payday comes round, I am afraid he will find that, however diligent he may have been towards the men, he will be in a dire predicament, for he will have no silver or gold to hand out because he has forgotten to apply to headquarters. Now, brethren, the minister

does, as it were, distribute the portions to the people, but if he does not apply to his Master to get them, he will have nothing to distribute. Never sever the connection between your soul and God. Keep up a constant communication with heaven or your communications with earth will be of little worth. To cease from prayer is to stop the vital stream upon which all your energy is dependent—you may go on preaching and teaching, and giving away tracts, and whatever you do—but nothing can possibly come of it when the power of Almighty God has ceased to be with you.

Thus much on our first point. May the Holy Spirit use it and awaken the churches to unanimous, intense, persistent intercession.

II. Next, we notice THE NUMBER ASSEMBLED which is *a rebuke to some here present*. The text says, "*Many* were gathered together praying." Somebody said the other day of prayer meetings that two or three thousand people had no more power in prayer than two or three. I think that is a grave mistake in many ways, but clearly so in reference to each other. For have you never noticed that when many meet together praying, warmth of desire and glow of earnestness are greatly increased? Perhaps two or three might have been all dull, but out of a larger number someone, at least, is a warm-hearted brother, and sets all the rest on a flame. Have you not observed how the requests of one will lead another on to ask for yet greater things? How one Christian brother suggests to another to increase his petition and so the petitions grow by the mingling of heart with heart, and the communion of spirit with spirit? Besides, faith is a cumulative force. "According to your faith so is it done unto you," is true to one, to two, to 20, to twenty thousand. And 20,000 times the force will be the result of 20,000 times the faith. Rest assured that while two or three have power with God in their measure, two or three hundred have still more. If great results are to come, they will be accompanied by the prayers of many. The brightest days of all will never come except by the unanimous prayer of the entire church, for as soon as Zion travails—not one or two in her midst, but the whole church travails—then shall she bring forth her children. Therefore I do earnestly pray, brethren, to make the numbers gathered in prayer as great as they can be. Of course, if we come together listlessly—if each heart is cold and dead—there is only so much more coldness and deadness. But taking for granted that each one comes in the spirit of prayer, the gathering of numbers is like adding firebrand to firebrand and piling on the burning coals—and we are likely to have a heat like that of coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame. Now this is *not a very common occurrence* and why is it that so many prayer meetings are so very thin? I know some places in London where they talk about giving up the prayer meeting, where instead of two services during the week, they have compassion on their poor overworked minister and only wish him to hold forth for a few minutes at a sort of mongrel service, half prayer meeting and half lecture. Poor dear things, they cannot manage to get out to worship more than once in the week, they are so much occupied. This is not in poor

churches, but in respectable churches. Gentlemen who do not get home from the city and have their dinner till seven o'clock cannot be expected to go out to a prayer meeting—who would have the barbarity to suggest such a thing! They work so extremely hard all the day, so much harder than any of the working men, that they say, "I pray you have me excused." Churches in the suburbs, as a general rule, have miserable prayer meetings because of the unfortunate circumstances of the members who happen to be burdened with so much riches that they cannot meet for prayer as poor people do. Some of you who have your delightful villas are very careful of your health and never venture out into the evening air to prayer meetings, though I rather suspect that your parties and socials are still kept up. I say this not with particular reference to anybody, except if it happens to refer to you, and if it does refer to you, the reference is very special. After all, dear friends, this is a personal matter. It is of no use my standing here or you sitting there and complaining that so few come to the prayer meeting—how are we to increase the number? I would suggest to you a way of increasing it, namely, by coming yourself. You may be aware, perhaps, that one and one make two, and that another one will make three, so that by additions of ones we shall gradually get up to thousands. The largest numbers are made up of units, so that the practical point of all is, if choice blessings are to be gained by numbers coming together for prayer, the way for me to increase the number is to go there myself; and if I can induce a friend to go also, so much the better.

I have a very high opinion of the early church, but I am not sure that quite so many would have been gathered together that night if it had not been that Peter was in prison. They said to one another, "Peter is in prison, and in danger of his life, let us go to the prayer meeting and plead for him." Did you ever know a minister who was often laid aside by illness and always found his people pray better when he was ill? Did it ever strike you that one reason for his being afflicted was God's desire to stir the hearts of his people to intercede for him? Their prayers are better than his preaching and so his Lord says to him, "I can do without you. I will put you on the bed of pain and make the people pray." Now, I have an opinion that the best way for these people to really do good for their pastor is to pray that they always be kept in a right condition and may not need his sickness as a stimulus to prayer. If churches become slack in prayer, those whom they most value may be laid aside, or even taken away by death—and then they will cry to God in the bitterness of their souls. Could we not do without such flogging? Some horses want to be reminded, now and then, with a little touch of the whip. If they did not need the lash they would not get it. And so it may be with us, that we need church trials to keep us up to the mark in prayer—and if we need them we shall have them. But if we are alive and earnest in prayer, it may be that Peter will not get into prison and some other trying things will not happen besides.

III. The third thing in our text is THE PLACE OF ASSEMBLY, and that we will dwell upon this morning as *a suggestion*. "The house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark." This was a prayer meeting held in a private house and I want to urge all my brethren here to consecrate their houses by frequently using them for prayer meetings. This would have an advantage about it—it would avoid all savor of superstition. There still lingers, among people, the notion that buildings may be consecrated and rendered holy. Well, it is so babyish an idea that I should have hoped the manliness of this generation, let alone anything else, would have given up the notion. How can it be that inside four brick walls there should be more holiness than outside, or that prayer offered in some particular seat should be more acceptable than prayer offered anywhere else? Behold, this day God hears prayer wherever there is a true heart—

"Wherever we seek Him, He is found
And every place is hallowed ground."

Meetings for prayer, held at the house of the mother of Mark, at *your* mother's house, at your brother's house, at your own house, will do much to be a plain protest against the superstition which reverences holy places. There was meetness in their meeting in this particular house, the house of Mark's mother, for that family stood in a very dear relationship to Peter. Do you know who Mark was, in reference to Peter? If you turn to Peter's First Epistle, in the fifth chapter, you will read, "Marcus, my son." Ah, I am sure Mark would pray for Peter, because Peter was his spiritual father. I should not wonder but what Mark and his mother were both converted on the day of Pentecost, when Peter preached that famous sermon. Anyway, Mark was converted under Peter, and so both he and his mother often invited Peter to their house, and when he was imprisoned they had the special prayer meetings at their house, because they loved him greatly. There is sure to be prayer for the pastor in the house where the pastor has been blessed to the family. He need not be afraid but what his own sons and daughters in the faith will be sure to pray for him.

These meetings had a good effect upon Mrs. Mark's house. She, herself, no doubt, had a blessing, but her son, Mark, obtained peculiar favor of the Lord. Naturally he was not all we should like him to have been, for though his uncle Barnabas was very fond of him, Paul, who was a very good judge, could not put up with his instability. But he obtained so great a blessing from the Lord that he became, according to the unanimous tradition of the church, the writer of the gospel of Mark. He might have been a very weak and useless Christian if it had not been that the prayer meetings at his mother's house warmed his heart. And he might never have used his graphic pen for the Lord had not the conversation of the good people who came to his house instructed him as to the facts which he afterwards recorded in the precious gospel which bears his name. The house received a blessing, and so will you too, if your house shall be, every now and then, opened for special prayer. I urge upon the followers of Jesus Christ to use their own houses more frequently than

they now do for holy purposes. How largely might the Sunday schools in London be extended if all the better-instructed gathered together Bible classes in their own houses and taught them during the Sabbath. And what a multitude of prayers would go up to heaven if Christians, who have suitable rooms, would frequently call together their brethren and neighbors to offer prayer. Many an hour is wasted in idle talk. Many an evening frittered away in foolish amusements degrading to Christians, when the time might be occupied in exercises calculated to bring down untold blessings upon the family and upon the church.

Prayer meetings at private houses are very useful, because friends who would be afraid to pray before a large assembly and others, who if they did so would be very much restricted in language, are able to feel free and easy in a smaller company in a private house. Sometimes, too, the social element is consecrated by God to promote a greater warmth and fervor so that prayer will often burn in the family when perhaps it might have declined in the public assembly. I never knew the little church of which I was pastor before I came here to be in such a happy condition as when the members took it into their heads to hold prayer meetings in their own houses. I have sometimes myself attended six or seven in an evening, running from one to another just to look in upon them, finding 12 in a kitchen, 10 or a dozen in a parlor, two or three together in a little chamber. We saw a great work of grace then. The biggest sinners in the parish felt the power of the gospel. The old saints warmed up and began to believe in young people being converted and we were all alive by reason of the abundance of prayer. Brethren, we must have the same abundance of prayer—pray that we may have it. We have been distinguished as a church for prayerfulness and I am jealous with a godly jealousy lest we should go back in any degree. I do affectionately suggest to you with much earnestness of heart that we should try to increase the number of the places where many shall be met together praying. I do not know where the mother of John Mark is, this morning, but I hope she will start a prayer meeting in her large room. She is well-to-do, I believe, because her brother Barnabas had land and sold it, and I suppose she had property, also. We will use her drawing room. If a poorer friend has a smaller and poorer room, we shall be glad of the loan of it, for it will be more suitable for persons of another class to go to. Perhaps they would not like to go to Mrs. Mark's drawing room, but they will come to your kitchen. All sorts will have an opportunity of praying when all sorts of chambers are dedicated to prayer.

IV. I have a little to say about THE TIME OF THIS PRAYER MEETING. It was held at dead of night. I suppose they prayed all through the night. They could say, "We have been waiting, we have been waiting, all the night long." After midnight, the angel set Peter free. Peter went to the house and they had not gone to bed, but many were met together praying. Now, as to the time for prayer meetings, let me say this. If it happens to be an inconvenient hour, and I should think the dead of night was rather inconvenient, nevertheless go. Better hold prayer meetings at mid-

night than not at all. Better that we should be accused, as the Christians were of old, of holding secret conventicles under the shadow of night, than not meet together for prayer.

But there is another lesson. The dead of the night was chosen because it was the most suitable hour, since they could not safely meet in the day because of the Jews. It becomes those, who appoint the times for prayer meetings, to select as good an hour as they can—a quiet hour, a leisure hour, an hour suited to the habits of the people. Still, let us remember that whatever hour is appointed, if we come together with true hearts, it will be an acceptable hour. Better still, it would be well if there could be meetings for prayer at all hours. Then every hour would be an acceptable hour, and if one happened to be unseasonable, another would be convenient—and all classes of believers could thus meet together at some time or other to pour out their hearts in prayer to God. Oh, brethren, if your business will not let you meet in the middle of the day, meet in the middle of the night; if you cannot come together for prayer at the times that are generally appointed, then have prayer meetings at such times as will suit yourselves, only let there be a unanimous resolve throughout the whole church of Christ that much prayer shall be presented to the Most High.

V. Notice, in the last place, the SUCCESS OF THE PRAYER MEETINGS AS AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO US. They prayed and they were heard at once. The answer came so speedily that they were themselves surprised. It has sometimes been said that they did not really expect Peter to be set free. And that their astonishment was the result of unbelief. Perhaps so, but I doubt it, for you must remember that their prayers *did* set Peter free, and therefore it does not look as if it could have been unbelieving prayer. I trace their surprise to another cause. I think they expected that God would somehow or other deliver Peter, but they did not think He would deliver him in the dead of the night. They very likely had appointed in their own minds that something would happen the next day and so their surprise arose, not from the fact that Peter was free, so much as from his being out of the dungeon at that particular time, and in that particular manner. I cannot judge that to have been an unbelieving prayer which really did win the day with the God of heaven. Dear friends, the Lord Jesus waits to give us great blessings in answer to prayer. He can send us surprises quite as great as those which astonished the assembly at midnight. We may pray for some sinner and while we are yet praying, we may hear him cry, "What must I do to be saved?" We may offer our prayers for the sleeping church and while we pray, it may be answered. But the church still sleeps. She has had a smiting on the side of late, but has not yet girded herself and come out of the prison of her coldness and conventionality. But if we continue in prayer we may see, with astonishment, the church rouse herself from sleep and come forth to liberty. We cannot tell what will happen. Prayer operates in so many ways, but operate it will, and we shall assuredly have our reward.

I selected this topic just now for this reason. The American evangelists who have been so useful in this great city have gone from us and the great assemblies which they gathered are no more. There must have been many converted—I cannot but believe that many thousands have received the Lord Jesus Christ and I have no sympathy whatever with the remarks of those who are alarmed that our friends have not touched the lowest class of society. I believe they have touched every class of society. At any rate, their business was to preach the gospel to every creature, and they have done so with great impartiality and earnestness. If the poorest did not go, it was not because they were not welcome. But they did go. I am an eyewitness to it. I know that many who went nowhere before did attend the Bow and Camberwell Halls, and the fact that the congregation looked respectable by no means proves that they were not of the working classes, for what working man is there among us but tries to dress as neatly as he can when he goes to a place of worship? There are plenty of friends here who work hard for their daily bread, but looking around they all seem, by their dress, to be well-to-do. No one has a right to judge, that because a man does not come to worship in rags, he cannot, therefore, belong to the lower portion of the working class, for it is not the habit of the working men of London to go to places of worship in their everyday clothes or in rags. I saw with my own eyes that multitudes assembled there were of that class which did not habitually hear the gospel. I am sure that good was done and I do not care who quibbles.

The practical point is—What is to be done now? We must keep up this work. And how? Not by those large assemblies, but by all the churches being revived all round—and the numbers in all the places of worship becoming more numerous—and at the same time becoming more prayerful. Let us pray *now*. We need prayer to train the converts, to keep God's people warm, now they are warm, and to make them yet more so. What wonders we have obtained in the Tabernacle in answer to prayer. We began this work with a little handful of Christian men. I remember the first Monday night, after I came to London—there was a slender audience on the Sabbath, but thank God there was almost as many at the prayer meeting as on Sunday. And I thought, "This is all right. These people can pray." They did pray, and as we increased in prayer, we increased in numbers. Sometimes, at prayer meetings, my heart was almost ready to break for joy because of the mighty supplication that was offered. We wanted to build this great house—we were poor enough, but we prayed for it, and prayer built it. Praying gave us everything we have. Praying brings us all manner of supplies, spiritual and temporal. Whatever I am in the church of God this day, I owe, under God's blessing, to your prayers. As long as your prayers sustain me, I shall not flag nor fail. But if your prayers are gone, then my power is gone, for the Spirit of God is gone and what can I do without Him? All through the church of God the true progress is in proportion to the prayer. I do not care about the talent of the speaker. I am glad if he has talent. I do not care about the wealth

of the congregation, though I am glad if they have wealth. But I do care beyond everything for the deep, real, earnest prayer—the darting up of the souls of Christians to God—and the bringing down of the blessing upon men from God.

And if this were the last word I had to address to this congregation, I would say to you, dear brethren, abound in prayer. Multiply the petitions that you put up and increase the fervor with which you present them to God. When my venerable predecessor, Dr. Rippon, was growing old, this was one of the things everybody noticed about him, that he always prayed earnestly for his successors. He did not know who they might be, but his prayer was that God would bless the church and his successors in years to come. And I have heard old Christians say that our present prosperity might be traced to Dr. Rippon's prayers. Oh, let us pray. I believe we have had a revival very much in answer to the multitudinous fervent prayers that were put up here and elsewhere. And now that God is beginning to bless the church in answer to prayer, if she stays her hand she will be like that king of old who had the arrows and the bow put into his hands and shot once or twice, whereas, if he had shot many times, God would have destroyed Syria before him and established his people. Take down your quivers full of desires and grasp the mighty bow of faith. Now shoot again and again the arrow of the Lord's deliverance and God will give us multitudes of converts all over London and throughout the world. "Prove me now herewith," says the Lord of Hosts, "and see if I do not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that you shall not have room enough to receive it." God bless you, for Christ's sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts 12:1-19.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—1,009, 978, 1,000.

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THE CHOICE OF A LEADER
NO. 1248

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 1, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And he spoke a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master: but everyone that is perfect shall be as his master."
Luke 6:39, 40.

MAN can hardly be retained in the place of wisdom, even if brought there. Truth lies between two extremes and man, like a pendulum, swings either too much this way or that. He abides not long in one place, but tosses from side to side, never, except by divine grace, finding rest in the middle point of wisdom. Two extremes exist in reference to the pilgrimage and scholarship of life. Some assert that man needs no guide whatever. Is he not a noble creature, gifted with high intelligence? Can he not reason and judge, and understand and discern? He can surely find his own way without direction from without. As a learner, why does he need a teacher? He can instruct himself. Is he not possessed of science? Has he not already found out many inventions? Such self-sufficient boasters will not, therefore, condescend to sit at the feet of a master or follow the track of a guide—and consequently, they frequently become erratic, singular, lawless, and unreasonable in their modes of thought and action. Into the mazes of infidelity and atheism such pilgrims wander. Into foolishness and strong delusion such teachers of themselves conduct their own minds. This scheme is dangerous, but its opposite pole is not less so.

Deliver a man from rationalism and he often swings into superstition, and says, "I see that I need a guide, I will take the one nearest to me." Finding a guide constituted by this authority or that, the man who has ceased to use his judgement surrenders himself at once to his leadership and reckons that to question is to be guilty of wicked unbelief. Without considering whether the guide is a seeing man or blind, or the teacher an instructed and qualified instructor, the credulous yield themselves up to priests or leaders and are sorely misled. Weary of thinking, they beg others to think for them and there they leave the matter.

This is the religion of a great many and they find much in it—the peace of slumbering stupidity. They meet with a church which claims to be venerable for antiquity and then they believe whatever that church chooses to teach. They consider that they have no right any longer to judge or to use their understanding. They hang conscience and reason in a sling, as if they were broken arms, no longer usable, and give themselves up to be wheeled about like invalids in the chairs of tradition and dogmatism. They do not dare to question—that would spoil the whole

thing—they shut their eyes and let other people see for them. No, they shut their eyes to be guided by blind men. They give up thinking, to be directed by those who have also given up thinking, who have long ago shut their eyes and opened their mouths to take in whatever a supreme council or a pope may please to put into them.

Between these two extremes there is a narrow path of right, and happy is he who finds it, namely, the honestly and sincerely judging of whom the leader and teacher should be. This leads to the discovery that a leader has been appointed in the person of the Lord Jesus and a teacher in the divine Spirit—and then a complete, willing, and believing submission of the whole man to this infallible guidance. Happy is that man who, in the pride of intellect, determines not to be a guide to himself—and so to be guide to a fool. Happy is that man who, in the indolence of superstition, refuses to surrender himself up to be guided by his fellow man, call him priest, or pope, or minister, or what you will—but who, having found that God has sent His Son into this world of ours to be the Captain of salvation, who shall bring many sons into glory, follows where his commander leads the way. Happy is the man, having seen this same Jesus appointed to be the prophet of His people, delights to sit at His feet and receive of His words, reason, affection, contemplation, and will—finding perfect rest in Him. He, with his eyes open, follows the All-Seeing One and with his mind illuminated, becomes a disciple of the Eternal Light.

It is clear that the most important thing, if we are agreed that we need a guide, is to examine the claims of those who aspire to the office. Some take a guide because, as I have said before, he is appointed by authority—he happens to be the parson of the parish, or the family minister—and he is at once accepted without consideration. He would be a very foolish person who would, in climbing the mountains of Switzerland, take a guide merely because he professed to be one and carried the usual certificates, if upon looking at him, it was clear that the man was stone blind. Would you say that does not matter, he says he is appointed by authority? Would you go to the top of Mont Blanc with him? If so, he would soon conduct you into a crevasse and there would be an end to your folly. Yet multitudes resolve upon taking their religion by prescription, feeling confident that what is patronized by the great, and established, and endowed by the nation, must, of course, be right. Whether the guide can see or not seems to be a trifle. What matters is that he is properly ordained and duly inducted. If that is settled, the unthinking many ask no more. For my part, I like to look at my guide's eyes. I like to know whether he has ever traversed the country and whether he has had experience of the way. If he cannot satisfy me on those points, I look elsewhere, to one who has all sight and has had all experience, even the Lord Jesus. His authority I cannot question. I take for granted all that He teaches me. I am glad to be a seeing man following a seeing leader, and I endeavor to be an intelligent scholar learning of a wise and sympathetic teacher.

Our text has much wisdom about it as to this matter, for, first, *it announces to us a great general principle*, as a warning, namely, that a dis-

ciple does not get above his Master, but becomes like he is. Secondly, *it gives a special application* of the great general principle to Christ, that as we are perfected, we shall become like He is, even as in the case of all other disciples who grow like their masters. After these points, I shall try to use the text for the encouragement of those who desire Christ as their Master, by saying that *we may put the facts mentioned in the text to a practical test.*

I. Let us take THE GREAT GENERAL PRINCIPLE as a warning.

Several truths are involved in the text, and these all illustrate the main point. It is evident that *the disciple is generally drawn to the master who is most like himself*—the blind man is led by the blind. It is not merely that birds of a feather flock together and therefore, men of kindred minds form association with each other, but there is about us all a natural tendency to admire our own image and to be willing to submit to any who are superior to us, and yet are of our type. A teacher who does not shock our prejudices, but shows a sympathy with our tastes, we are at home with at once. The priest is like the people because the people are pleased to have him so. It is true of teachers as of idols, "They that make them are like unto them." If the blind man could only see, he would not choose a blind man to be his guide. But as he cannot see, he meets with one who talks as blind men talk, who judges things as they are in the dark, and who does not know what sighted men know and therefore, never reminds the blind man of his infirmity. And at once he says, "This is my ideal of a man, he is exactly the leader I require. I will commit myself to him." So the blind man takes the blind man to be his guide—and this is the reason why error has been so popular. No error would live if it did not chime in with some evil propensity of human nature, if it did not gratify some error in man to which it is congruous. Idolatry is a prevailing sin because man is alienated from God who is a Spirit, and in his carnal folly demands a god whom his senses can apprehend. When you hear of crowds going over to Popery, do not wonder at it. Popery is the religion of depraved human nature put into shape by Satan and therefore, it is no marvel that the nations are fascinated by it. What they love and what the god of this world sweetens to their tooth must go down with them. Popery and other forms of sacramentarianism are a soft bed for idle limbs and as surely as a lazy man lies down, so surely does a superstitious man take to these systems. Give a superstitious man the information contained in the Bible and a pair of scissors to cut his coat according to his shape, and Popery, in some shape or other, will be the religion which he will cut out for himself. Consequently it is popular. You cannot, at first, understand how the blind man who sets up for a guide could expect to find clients. Neither would he, only there are so many other blind people about who know nothing about his blindness and are sure to come to him. Mind you that you are not so blind yourself as to follow their example. Young man, mind who it is you choose for a guide. Your tendencies will be to select a wrong one, because your tendencies themselves are wrong. Pray that you may begin aright the journey of life, having divine grace infixed into your hearts, that you may choose the

Christ of God who is "the way, the truth, and the life." O Lord, let no soul here be so blind as to choose blind atheism, blind skepticism, or blind superstition to be his leader. You take the blind in the hand and lead them by a way that they know not and by paths which they have not seen. Do these things unto them and do not forsake them.

Having chosen his tutor, the student gradually becomes more and more like his master, or, having taken his guide, the tendency is to tread more closely in his footsteps and obey his rules more fully every day. We must be all conscious that we imitate those whom we admire. love has a strange influence over our nature, to mold it into the form of our beloved. A true disciple is like clay on the wheel and his master fashions him after his own image. We may be scarcely conscious of it, but we are most surely being conformed to the likeness of those to whose influence we submit ourselves. Whoever, then, your master may be, dear friend, you are changing into his image. If you choose to be led by the votary of pleasure, you will become more and more frivolous. If you admire the slave of avarice, you will become avaricious. If you feel the sway of the minion of vice, you will yourself grow vicious. If a man who despises the Word of God becomes your hero, you will, before long, despise it, too. While you are gazing upon him with admiration, a kind of photography is going on, and you, like a sensitive plate, receive his image. I charge you, therefore, to be careful who your guide becomes.

And mark, *the pupil does not go beyond the tutor*, nor does the man who submits to be led go beyond his guide. Such a case is very rarely found. Indeed, I may say, never, for when the one who is led goes beyond his leader, he is not, in truth, *led* any longer—rarely enough does it ever come to that. Men, if they outstrip their leaders, generally do so in the wrong direction. They seldom exaggerate their virtues—those they frequently omit—they usually exaggerate peculiarities, follies, failings, and faults. It is said that in the court of Richard III, because the king was round-shouldered, the courtiers gradually became humpbacked. And we have seen a whole country idiotic enough, not in the last century, but in this century, to have almost all its women limping because a popular princess was afflicted with a temporary lameness. It is the way of mankind. They imitate each other as if by instinct. This is the only excuse I know of for Darwin's theory of our having descended from the ape. Imitativeness is well developed in us, but if left to itself, it works with a bias the wrong way and the imitation is most forcible in the direction of deformity and defect. In music, painting, poetry, and literature, men of a school seldom excel their master, or, if they do, they leave him. But the habit is to perpetrate the master's mannerisms and weaknesses. It is even more so in the art of living. Young men, in the task of choosing a master for your faith, I beseech you be careful to have none but the best, for you will not excel, but rather fall behind the master you follow. You are choosing a leader—choose one who knows the road—for if he has made some blunders, you will make 10 times as many, and in all probability, you will exaggerate each one of his mistakes.

The most solemn truth remains to be noted. *When a man chooses a bad leader for his soul, at the end of all bad leadership there is a ditch.* A man teaches error which he declares he has drawn from Scripture, and he backs it up with texts perverted and abused. If you follow that error and take its teacher for a leader, you may, for a time, be very pleased with yourself for knowing more than the poor plain people who keep to the good old way, but mark my word, there is a ditch at the end of the error. You do not see it yet, but there it is, and into it you will fall if you continue to follow your leader. At the end of error, there is often a moral ditch and men go down, down, down—they scarcely know why—till presently, having imbibed doctrinal error, their moral principles are poisoned and like drunken men, they find themselves rolling in the mire of sin. At other times, the ditch beyond a lesser error may be an altogether damnable doctrine. The first mistake was comparatively trifling, but, as it placed the mind on an inclined plane, the man descended almost as a matter of course, and almost before he knew it, found himself given over to a strong delusion to believe a lie. The blind man and his guide, whatever else they miss, will be sure to find the ditch—they need no sight to obtain an entrance into that. Alas, to fall into the ditch is easy, but how shall they be recovered? I would earnestly entreat, especially professing Christians, when novelties of doctrine come up, to be very cautious how they give heed to them. I bid you remember the ditch. A small turn of the switch on the railway is the means of taking the train to the far east or to the far west. The first turn is very little, indeed, but the points arrived at are remote. There are new errors which have lately come up which your fathers knew not, with which some are mightily busy. And I have noticed when men have fallen into them, their usefulness ceased. I have seen ministers go only a little way in speculative theories and gradually glide from latitudinarianism into Socinianism or Atheism. Into these ditches thousands fall. Others are precipitated into an equally horrible pit, namely, the holding nominally of all the doctrines in theory and none of them in fact. Men hold truths nowadays with the heart taken out of then, and the very life and meaning torn away. There are members and ministers of evangelical denominations who do not believe evangelical doctrine, or if they do believe it, they attach but little importance to it. Their sermons are essays on philosophy tinged with the gospel. They put a quarter of a grain of gospel into an Atlantic of talk—and poor souls are drenched with words to no profit. God save us from ever leaving the old gospel, or losing its spirit and the solid comfort which it brings. Yet into the ditch of lifeless profession and philosophic dreaming we may soon fall if we commit ourselves to wrong leaderships. All this should prevent us, as I think, from taking any man whatever as our leader, for if we trust to any mere man, though he may be right in 99 of the hundred, he is wrong, somewhere, and our tendency will be to be more influenced by his one wrong point than by any of his right ones. Depend upon it, in matters of religion, that ancient malediction is abundantly verified, “Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.” There is one whom you may follow implicitly and one only. There is one whom you may trust

without reserve and only one—the Man, Christ Jesus, the Son of God. But if you do not wish to be led into errors of heart and practice, beware of men, and follow none but Jesus. Follow no footprints but the footprints of that flock which follows at His heel. You will do best not even to follow the sheep, but to follow the Shepherd only, and to do that even if you walk alone. May the Holy Spirit be given you to lead you into all truth. Thus much upon the great principle—let it act as a warning.

II. ITS SPECIAL APPLICATION TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST is our encouragement. If we have the Lord Jesus Christ as our leader we certainly cannot go beyond our leader, but we shall be privileged to grow more and more like He and we shall be perfected, according to our text, as our leader is.

First, *this is what we might have expected*. We see ordinarily, as we have said that the disciple grows like his Master, but with such a Master the process becomes surer. With such a Master, of whom these lips cannot speak well enough, a Master the laces of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose, it may well come to pass that we are melted down with love and poured out into the mold of obedience. He is the Creator—can He not create in us His image? From such a ne as He is, we confidently expect it.

For, observe, the teaching, itself is such that it must have power over hearts that yield to it. His doctrine is almighty love—all His teaching is divine and yet so broken down to human capacity that it exactly suits the man who has taken the yoke of Christ upon him and determined to learn of Him. Other masters teach us crooked and doubtful lessons. And when learned, too often the best wisdom is to unlearn them. But with our Lord, the teaching is most sure, most heavenly, most potent—and we feel within ourselves that it is so true, so noble, so grand—that it comes to us with authority and not as the word of man.

If I knew only what Jesus teaches, I would conclude that a teacher who gives forth such doctrines and such precepts must influence His disciples. But it is not in His teaching alone that His influence lies. The most potent charm is *Himself*. When He spoke here below they said, "Never man spoke like this Man," and the reason was because, "never man lived like this Man." His Word was with power, but then He Himself was THE WORD. If you view the precepts of Christ as embodied in His life, they glow with beauty and flash with power. You can bear from such a Teacher what you could not have endured from anybody else, for His character gives Him a right to speak. Many of His precepts would have seemed perfectly preposterous had they first fallen from the lips of fallible men, for their hearers would have cried out, "Physician, heal yourself." Coming from Him, they come naturally as good fruit from a good tree—they are the necessary fruit of such a nature and such a life. Who can help being persuaded when the arguments live before our eyes? We are overpowered by the grandeur of the Redeemer's goodness, by the splendor of His love, the infinity of His self-sacrifice. Jesus commands our faith by the revelation of Himself and by that same revelation He conforms us to Himself. Was ever such a life as His? Was ever such a death?

Was ever such an altogether lovely person as His? Was ever such perfection as His? In life, He was so outspoken and yet so gentle, so courageous and yet so kind, so unflinching and yet so tender, wearing His heart upon His sleeve in the transparency of truth, but prudent and guarding Himself with infallible wisdom. He was a match for all, however they might assail Him, and yet apparently never on His guard at all, but as a child among them, the holy child Jesus. Oh, if you sit at Jesus' feet you will not only learn of Him and His teaching will have power over you, but you will learn *Him*, for He Himself is His own best lesson. Never did eyes look up into those dear eyes of Jesus, which are "as the eyes of doves by the rivers of water, washed with milk and fitly set," but they were themselves cleansed and purified till they became "like the fish pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Beth-rabbim." Who could bear the Lord Jesus on his heart, like a cluster of myrrh, and not be perfumed by His presence? Who could be with Him and not be like He is?

We feel quite sure that the disciples will grow like their Master in the case of Jesus because He inspires them with an intense love to Himself which flames forth in enthusiasm for Him. Get a teacher whom all the scholars love and admire, and they will soon learn. Make them enthusiastic for him, and no lesson will be too hard. This, our dear and blessed Lord, of whom these lips cannot speak as they should, has done. We admire, we love, no, we adore Him. He is our God, our all in all, and therefore we desire to be molded at His will. Live for Him? Yes, we find it to be our joy, for the love of Christ empowers us. Die for Him? Yes, His saints in all ages have rejoiced to lay down their lives for Him. Full of fervor and fired with enthusiasm, they have suffered losses and reproaches for His name's sake. If the Teacher inspires such enthusiasm, doubtless He will fashion the disciples in His likeness.

Best of all, our great Teacher has a Spirit with Him, a mighty Spirit, God Himself, the Holy Spirit. And when He teaches, He teaches not with words alone, but with a power which goes beyond the ear into the heart itself. Other teachers, except as they follow Christ, must depend upon the charms of eloquence, or the force of argument. But our Lord, though most eloquent of all, for His lips are like lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh—though full of arguments, for His is the wisdom of God—relies upon the energy which He felt when He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, for the Lord has anointed Me." The divine Spirit casts a light into the soul of such a brilliance that things not seen stand out in clearest evidence. And things hoped for are grasped in their very substance. With that light there comes also life to feel, power to realize, and discernment to judge. And so the soul is led into all truth and the scholar receives the lessons of his Lord in their life and energy. Who else can give this Spirit? By what other teacher can the Holy Spirit be breathed into us? Who would not sit at the feet of a Master so transcendently above all others in possessing such an infinite gift? I would to God, while I am speaking thus, that some here present would say, "Gladly would I commit myself to that great Teacher." Remember, beloved, if you want Him to be your Master, He equally longs for you to be His disciple.

I think I have now shown that it was to be expected that, with such a Master, disciples should become like He is. Now let me observe that *this was virtually promised*. It is promised to us, in effect, in the great decree of predestination, "For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." This is the great purpose of God, that Christ may be the first-born among many brethren, and that the brethren may be a company in whose faces the Lord shall discern the image of the Only Begotten. What God predestinates, we may confidently expect.

It is promised to us in the very name of Jesus Christ, for that name is Jesus, "For He shall save His people from their sins." But saving men from their sins is the bringing of them back into a condition of purity and holiness. This indeed is the salvation which we preach—not the mere forgiveness of sin, as some think—but the conquering of sin, the driving out of sin, the making of men like the Lord Jesus by the Spirit of God. The very name of Jesus tells us that He means to make His disciples as free from sin as He is.

We know, also, that this was our Lord's object, for the design of Christ's life is clearly seen in His last prayer when He prayed, "Sanctify them through Your truth; Your Word is truth. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." You can see that His one object is to make His people holy as He is holy, to keep them from evil even as He was kept, and to make them conquerors over sin even as He conquered. All His life He labored at this with the 12 and with others who followed with Him and His last prayer breathes this, "I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil." Everywhere this is seen to be true. The relationships which He assumes suppose it, for brethren are like their brother, and friends are like their friend. The metaphors which He uses imply the same thing, for the engrafted branch drinks in the nature of the stem, the spouse grows like her husband, and the members of the body are of the same nature as the head. The mystical Christ it not like the image of the Babylonian monarch's dream with head of gold, and feet of clay, but Christ is one throughout. The grace which dwells in the head, transforms the whole body. It is our delightful expectation that, "We shall be like He is, for we shall see Him as He is," and then we shall be satisfied, for we shall wake up in His likeness.

Well, brethren, what we might have expected, and what God has thus virtually promised, *has been actually seen*, for the disciples have been like their Lord, and this is where I want to lay the most stress. Have not the disciples been like their Lord in points of character? It would be very absurd for me to say that the Old Testament saints were disciples of Christ in a literal sense, and yet in spirit they all were so, for the gospel is the same in all ages, and it is the same light which lightens every man that comes into the world. The inner teaching of the Spirit was the same to Abel and to Noah as it was to John and Paul. And while apostles looked back to Jesus and were enlightened, patriarchs looked forward and had light, too. Now each of the saints in the olden time had some

likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of a few of them and you will see some of His beauties. Abel reveals His righteousness and Enoch His walking with God; Job shows His patience and Abraham His faith; Moses His meekness and Samuel His power of intercession; Daniel is like He in His integrity and Jeremiah in His weeping. Like drops of morning dew, all these reflected the light of the Sun of Righteousness.

In the New Testament, we see the transforming power of His teaching in many instances. Peter and John were like their Master, for we read that when their enemies "saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." The likeness was so striking that they were obliged to confess it. Take John alone, for a minute, and who can read his epistles without saying, "Even thus his Master spoke?" John was far behind his Lord, but yet how marvelously like Him! You have smiled at your children sometimes when you have seen your own ways repeated in them. You have beheld your own peculiarities as in a mirror. Almost unconsciously, they have been yourself in miniature. So was it evidently with John. If it is true, as tradition says, that he was carried into the assembly when he was too old to walk, and was in the habit of saying to them, "Little children, love one another: little children, love one another"—it was so like our Lord Jesus Christ, you might have thought the Master had returned to earth. As for Paul, in many aspects he is the counterpart of his Lord, and as I read that strange passage in Romans which staggers some, where he says, "I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, according to the flesh," I am led to say, "Herein he resembles that Blessed One who was actually made a curse for us, as it is written, 'Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.'" Now, all the saints of God, more or less, according as they have fully been disciples of Jesus, display His characteristics. I cannot stop, this morning, to tell you what characteristics I see in you which are like my Lord. I rejoice that I do know brothers and sisters here of whom I have often said to myself, "I can see their Master in them." I wish I could say so of all of you, but still, I am glad to see in so many the points of true likeness to Jesus, the family characteristics which mark all the children of God. There are little touches of their Father in all the heirs of salvation which make us feel that they belong to the same family as Jesus. They could not have learned those ways—they must have been imparted by a birth from above.

It is a very noteworthy thing that those who are disciples of Christ even become like Him as to their life story. Going back to the old saints as being really disciples of the doctrine of the Redeemer, there is Melchizedek bringing forth bread and wine to refresh Abraham—would you not have thought it was Christ Himself? There is Isaac gently submitting to his father while he draws the knife to slay him—could you not have said that it was Jesus? There is Joseph making himself known to his brethren and ruling all Egypt for their good—might we not have thought that it was our Lord come on earth before His time to bless His chosen ones? Yonder is David coming back with Goliath's head, while all the

maidens of Israel rejoice around him—could you not have thought it was our Master returning from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah? The saints are types of Him because they are of the same type as He is. As for the disciples after Christ came, you will often find them in positions which set forth Jesus Christ most evidently. See Stephen boldly declaring the gospel until his enemies stone him. Have you not read of his Master many times, "They would have stoned Him, but He conveyed Himself out of their sight"? Look at Paul at Lystra. They are about to sacrifice to him—it makes you think of days when the crowd cried, "Hosanna, Hosanna." Lo, the apostle rebukes the throng, and now are they stoning him—and it recalls to your memory the time when the crowd shouted, "Crucify Him, crucify Him; away with such a fellow from the earth." Read the story of Paul in the shipwreck, when he says to the captain of the ship, and to the officer of the troops, "Be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you." You might almost have thought it was the Savior Himself saying to the winds and waves, "Peace, be still." Indeed, Christ is in all His members. His life is written out again in their lives.

Beloved, I could mention many saints of modern times in whose lives we may see Jesus. That poor woman who dropped into the treasury her two mites, which were all her living—is she not very much like Jesus who gave up all for us, and became poor that we, through His poverty, might be rich? Others are like the woman who broke the alabaster box of precious ointment, to give their best things to her Lord. Do they not remind you of the Lover of our souls, who broke the precious alabaster box of His body and filled all earth and heaven with the perfume? Everyone who gives up self for God's glory is Jesus in miniature. Look at John Howard going about among the dungeons of Europe, spying out poor prisoners to do them good. Is not that Christ all over again, with glad tidings for the captives? Or John Williams landing at Erromanga with his life in his hands, to convert cannibals—was not that laying down his life for the sheep? Now, dear friends do you think if we had your life before us we could make out anything like Jesus Christ in it? If you are His disciple it will be so. There will it be in your biography as your children will read it—for they will read it better than anybody else. There it will be as your wife will read it and as those you work with will read it—something which looks as if it were extracted from the life of Jesus. Students in Christ's college must be like their Tutor, and they are.

I dare say the brother is present here of whom I am about to speak. And if so, he will be sorry to hear me tell the story and would stop my mouth if he could. I will, however, make bold to go on. I know a house painter who was working with other men over the top of the Great Northern Railway, at a great height. One of his fellow workmen had been drinking very heavily and was unsteady on the lofty scaffold. He said to himself, "That man will never get down alive," and rather than he should perish, he actually offered to carry him down on his back. I believe it would have been death to them both if the attempt had been made, but he cheerfully offered. He said, "My soul is safe. I am a Christian. I am

afraid you will be killed and if you are, your soul will be lost. I will carry you down if you will only keep quiet." The man rejected the kind offer, though persuaded again and again, and alas, in trying to descend, he fell into the middle of the railway from a dreadful height, and was taken up dead. When I heard of my good brother, a humble member of this church, doing that, I thought, "There is our Master, revealed in His disciple." Our life is a painting, and if we are in Christ's studio, there will be traces of His hand, and men will exclaim, "That was no common painter. That stroke, that line, is just the line that the great Master used to make. I am sure He has put in those touches." O brethren, we need none of us wish to be originals—let us plagiarize Christ—and that will be the grandest original. God help us in this.

Now I was going to say, but time has fled, that Christ's disciples grow like He in their struggles and in their temptations. They are met by Satan as Christ was. They are tried by the world as Christ was. They are assailed by Sadducean unbelief and Pharisaic superstition as Christ was. They have to go through the same fight and blessed be God, they win the same victories. Christ's disciples overcome sin. By their Master's help, they rise above doubt, they vanquish the world, and they stand in purity and faith. By-and-by they shall be like He in their rewards. "To him that overcomes," He says, "I will give to sit upon My throne, even as I have overcome and have sat down with My Father upon His throne."

It is a beautiful subject. I wish I had the power to work it out, the way in which the disciple of Jesus thus, by sure steps, becomes perfected into the image of Christ, till the likeness is so near and so close that even the blear eyes of this wicked world in the dim atmosphere of its ignorance cannot help seeing that the man is like the Master.

III. Now, lastly, we will dwell for two or three minutes upon this encouraging fact, that WE MAY PUT ALL OF THIS TO THE TEST, this morning, if we will. Brethren and sisters, if you are not disciples of Jesus Christ, remember He will receive you. He will receive you though you have been to other masters and learned a great deal under them, all of which you will have to unlearn. It is a very easy thing to take a man and teach him if his mind is clear and clean. But you have learned a great deal that you will have to forget. O you of 40, 50, or 60, what a world of mischief there is in you that will have to come out. Well, my Master will take you for pupils, though you have been with other masters all this while. And, though you do not know even the rudiments of what He is going to teach, He will take you. My Lord Jesus keeps an A B C school—He begins with the infants. What a mercy it is that He takes such poor, stupid heads as ours, who know nothing except what we ought not to know. And I will add, if you have but very little capacity, or none at all, it does not matter—

"He takes the fool, and makes him know
The wonders of His dying love."

Not many great men, not many mighty are chosen, but God has chosen the poor of this world, and things that are not, and things that are despised, yes, and weak things and foolish things, has God chosen. Come to

Him, for if you are incapable, He is not, and His capacity will soon overcome your incapacity. You say, "I cannot learn." Ah, but you do not know how well He can teach, for He can teach so well that even those who think they cannot learn are soon instructed in His school. Stand not back, dear friend, because you cannot pay the fee, for my Master's is a free school. He takes nothing from us, but He gives everything to us. The only admission ticket that you need is simply to be willing to be taught, to be conscious that you need teaching and guiding, and to submit yourself to His guidance and instruction. Are you willing to do so? "Oh," you say, "I shall grieve Him till He gives me up." Well, I have often thought so. I do not wonder that you are troubled with that thought—it has often come across me when I see what little progress I have made after being so many years in His school. If I had a human master, he would have been out of patience with me long ago. But the Lord Jesus Christ never gives up a scholar—having once commenced to teach, He continues His divine lessons till they are fully learned—and the more difficult it is for Him to teach, the more honor it will be when He gets all His scholars educated for the skies. He will not brook a defeat in this matter—He will overcome ignorance, sin, hardness of heart, infirmity, and incapacity till He shall have instructed us in the lore of heaven and made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Come, dear brethren and sisters, you that are scholars of Christ, let us sit at His feet. Let us follow in His ways more closely than ever. And you, dear friends, who as yet are not in His school, He says to you, "Who is simple, let him turn in here. As for him that needs understanding, let him eat of My bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled." May the good Lord incline your hearts to learn of Him, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 6:20-40.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—852, 262, 705.

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SAINTS IN HEAVEN AND EARTH ONE FAMILY
NO. 1249

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 8, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The whole family in heaven and earth."
Ephesians 3:15.

BEREAVEMENTS are among the sorest griefs of this mortal life. We are permitted by God to love those whom He gives to us and our heart eagerly casts its tendrils around them and therefore, when suddenly the beloved objects are withdrawn by death, our most tender feelings are wounded. It is not sinful for us to lament the departure of friends, for Jesus wept. It would be unnatural and inhuman if we did not mourn for the departed—we should be less feeling than the beasts of the field. The stoic is not a Christian and his spirit is far removed from that of the tender-hearted Jesus.

The better the friend, the greater our regret at his loss, although there also lies within that fact more abundant sources of consolation. The mourning for Josiah was very sore because he was so good a prince. Because Stephen was so full of the Holy Spirit, and so bold for the faith, devout men carried him to his burial and made great lamentation over him. Dorcas was wept for and bewailed because of her practical care for the poor. Had they not been true saints, the mourning had not been so great. Brethren, we cannot but sorrow this day, for the Lord has taken away a sister in Christ, a true servant of the church, a consecrated woman, whom He honored above many, and to whom He gave many crowns of rejoicing. And we cannot but sorrow all the more because so loving a mother in Israel has fallen asleep, so useful a life has come to a close, and so earnest a voice is hushed in silence. I have, this day, lost from my side one of the most faithful, fervent, and efficient of my helpers. And the church has lost one of her most useful members.

Beloved, we need comfort. Let us seek it where it may be found. I pray that we may view this source of grief, not with our natural, but with our spiritual eyes. The things external are for the natural eye and from that eye they force full many a tear, for in his natural life, man is the heir of sorrow. But there is an inward and spiritual life which God has given to believers—and this life has an inner eye—and to this inner eye there are other scenes presented than the senses can perceive. Let that spiritual vision indulge itself now; close your eyes as much as your tears will permit you to the things which are seen, for they are temporal and shadowy, and look to the eternal, secret, underlying truths, for these are realities. Take a steady look into the invisible, and the text, I think, sets before us

something to gaze upon which may minister comfort to us. The saints in heaven, though apparently separate from us, are, in reality, one with us. Though death seems to have made breaches in the church of God, it is, in fact, perfect and entire. Though the inhabitants of heaven and believers on earth might seem to be two orders of beings, yet in truth they are "one family."—

"Let all the saints terrestrial sing,
With those to glory gone;
For all the servants of our King
In earth and heaven are one."

So sings the poet. The text tells us that there is a "whole family." It speaks not of a broken family nor of *two* families, but of "the whole family in heaven and earth." It is still one undivided household, notwithstanding all the graves which crowd the cemetery. To this thought I shall call your attention, hoping that thereby you may enter into that "one communion," in which saints above are bound up with saints below. I invite you to consider the ties which bind us to those who have gone before, and the indissoluble kinship in Christ which holds us as much as ever in one sacred unity.

I. First, let us think of THE POINTS OF THIS GREAT FAMILY UNION. In what respects are the people of our God in heaven and earth our family? We answer, in very many, for their family relationship is so ancient, so certain, and so paramount that it may be seen in a vast variety of ways.

Let us note, first, concerning those in heaven and earth whom the Lord loves that their names are all *written in one family register*. That mystical roll which eye has not seen contains all the names of His chosen. They are born by degrees, but they are chosen at once—by one decree set apart from the rest of mankind—by one declaration, "They shall be Mine," separated forever as hallowed things unto the Most High. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, in which He has made us accepted in the Beloved." We like to keep our own family registers. We are pleased to look back to the place where our parents recorded our names with those of our brothers and sisters. Let us gaze by faith upon that great book of life where all the names of the redeemed stand indelibly written by the hand of everlasting love. And as we read those beloved names, let us remember that they make but one record. The faithful of modern times are on the same page with the saints of the Old Testament, and the names of the feeblest among us are written by the same hand which inscribed the apostles and the martyrs. We confidently believe that Mrs. Bartlett's name is found in the same roll which contains yours, my sister, though you may be the most obscure of the Lord's daughters. "Even as you are called in one

hope of your calling," so were you all comprehended in one election of grace.

The saints above and below are also *one family in the covenant*, "ordered in all things and sure," made with them in the person of their one great federal Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Sadly one are all the members of the human race in our first father, Adam, for in Adam we all fell. We realize that we are one family by the common sweat of the face, the common tendency to sin, the common liability to death—but there is a second Adam, and all whom He represented are most surely one family beneath His blessed headship. What the Lord Jesus has accomplished was achieved for all His people. His righteousness is theirs. His life is theirs. His Resurrection is the pledge of their resurrection. His eternal life is the source and guarantee of their immortal glory—

"With Him, their Head, they stand or fall—
Their life, their surety, and their all."

Let us think how close we are together then, for we are in very truth nearer to the saints in heaven than we are to the ungodly with whom we dwell. We are in one covenant headship with just men made perfect, but not with the unregenerate. We are fellow citizens with the glorified, but we are strangers and foreigners among worldlings. Christ Jesus represented us even as He represented the glorified ones in the old eternity, when the covenant was signed, and in that hour when the covenant stipulations were fulfilled upon the bloody tree. And He represents us with the glorified ones still, as He takes possession of the inheritance in the names of all His elect, and dwells in the glory which He is preparing for His one church.

It is sweet to remember that all the saints in heaven and earth have *the covenant promises secured to them by the selfsame seal*. You know the seal of the covenant—your eyes delight to dwell upon it, it is the sacrifice of the bleeding Lamb. And what, my brothers and sisters, is the ground of the security of the saints above, but the covenant of divine grace, sealed and ratified by the blood of the Son of God? We are rejoiced to see that, in the epistle to the Hebrews, in connection with the spirits of just men made perfect, the Holy Spirit mentions Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than that of Abel. The promise and the oath of God—those two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, are given to all the heirs of promise whether they are militant or triumphant. The Lord has said to them all, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people." Glory be to His name, the blood which is the ground of our hope of heaven guarantees to the perfected that they shall abide in their bliss. They are there as the "redeemed from among men," which we also are this day. That same blood which has made white their robes has also cleansed us from all sin.

The family in heaven and earth again will be plainly seen to be one, if you remember that they are *all born of the same Father*, each one in process of time. Every soul in heaven has received the new birth, for that which is born of the flesh cannot inherit a spiritual kingdom and there-

fore, even babes snatched away from the womb and breast ere yet they had fallen into actual sin, have entered heaven by regeneration. All there, whether they lived to old age or died in childhood, have been begotten again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and are born as to their heavenly state, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

The nature of all regenerate persons is the same, for in all it is the living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever. The same nature is in the saints above as in the saints below. They are called the sons of God and so are we. They delight in holiness and so also do we. They are of the church of the first-born and so are we. Their life is the life of God and so is ours—immortality pulses through our spirits as well as through theirs. Not yet, I grant, is the body made immortal, but as to our real life we know who has said, "Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." Is it not written, "You are made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust"? I know there is no higher nature than the divine, and this is said to have been bestowed upon the saints below. The new life in heaven is more developed and mature. It has also shaken off its dust and has put on its beautiful garments, yet it is the same. In the sinner born to God but yesterday there is a spark of the same fire which burns in the breasts of the glorified above. Christ is in the perfected and the same Christ is in us, for we are "all of one," and He calls us all brethren. Of the same Father, begotten, into the same nature born, with the same life quickening us, are we not one family? Oh, it needs but little alteration in the true saint below to make him a saint above. So slight the change that in an instant it is accomplished. "Absent from the body and present with the Lord." The work has proceeded so far that it only remains for the Master to give the last touch to it and we shall be meet for glory and shall enter into the heavenly rest with capacities of joy as suitable for heaven as the capacities of those who have been there these thousands of years.

We are one, yet further, brethren, because all saints, whether in heaven or earth, are *partakers in the same divine love*. "The Lord knows them that are His," not merely those in heaven but those below. The poor struggling child of God in poverty is as well known by God as yon bright songster who walks the golden streets. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry." I tell you, timid, trembling woman, humbly resting on your Savior, that you are as truly beloved of God as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who sit down at His table in glory. The love of God toward His children is not affected by their position, so that He loves those in heaven better and those on earth less. God forbid. You, being evil, are not so partial as to bestow all your love upon a son who has prospered in the world and give none of it to another who is bearing the burden of poverty. Our great Father loves the world of His elect with love surpassing thought and has given Himself to each one of them to be the portion of each individual forever. What more can He do for those in heaven? What less has He done for us? Jesus has engraved the names of all the redeemed upon His hands and heart; He loves them

all unto perfection; if then, they all dwell in the bosom of God as the dearly beloved of His soul, are they not indeed one family?

As they all receive the same love so are they all *heirs of the same promises* and the same blessed inheritance. I am bold to say that as a believer in Christ, heaven is as much mine as it is Paul's or Peter's. They are there to enjoy it and I am waiting to obtain it—but I hold the same title deeds as they do and as an heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ—my heritage is as broad and as sure as theirs. Their only right to heaven lies in the grace of God which brought them to believe in Jesus. And if we also have been brought by grace to believe in Jesus, our title to eternal glory is the same as theirs. Oh, child of God, do not think that the Lord has set apart some very choice and special blessings for a few of His people—all things are yours. The land is before you, even the land which flows with milk and honey, and the whole of it is yours, though you may be less than the least of all saints. The promise is sure to all the seed and all the seed have an interest in it. Remember that blessed passage, "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ"—not if full-grown children. Not if well-developed children. Not if strong, muscular children but "if children," and that is all. Regeneration proves you to be heirs, and alike heirs, for there can be no difference in the heirship if they are all heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Will you think of this, you who are little in Israel? You who rank with the Benjamites? Will you sit down and think of this? You are one of the same family, as those bright spirits who shine as the stars forever and ever. And their inheritance is also yours, though as yet you have not come of age, and like a minor must wait till you have been trained under tutors and governors and educated for heaven. You are a prince, though as yet an infant. You are one of the Redeemer's kings and priests, as yet uncrowned. You are waiting, waiting, but still secure of the inheritance. You are tarrying till the day breaks and the shadows flee away, but sure that in the morning the crown of life so long reserved will be brought forth and you also shall sit with Jesus on His throne.

So might I continue showing the points in which the saints above and the saints below are akin, but this last must suffice.

They are all members of one body—and are necessary to the completion of one another. In the epistle to the Hebrews we are told concerning the saints above that "they, without us, cannot be made perfect." We are the lower limbs, as it were, of the body, but the body must have its inferior as well as its superior members. It cannot be a perfect body should the least part of it be destroyed. Hence it is declared that in the dispensation of the fullness of time, He will gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. The saints above with all their bliss must wait for their resurrection until we also shall have come out of great tribulation. Like ourselves, they are waiting for the adoption to wit the redemption of the body. Until all who were predestinated to be conformed to the image of the first-born shall have been so conformed, the church cannot be complete. We are linked to the glorified by bonds of indispensable necessity. We think that we cannot do

without them, and that is true—but they also cannot do without us. "As the body is one and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many are one body, so also is Christ." How closely this brings us together. Those for whom we sorrow cannot be far away, since we are all "the body of Christ and members in particular." If it is dark, my hands know that the head cannot be far off, nor can the foot be far removed—eyes, ears, feet, hands, head are all comprised within the limits of one body—and so if I cannot see my beloved friend, if I shall not again hear her gracious voice on earth, nor see her pleading tears, yet am I sure she is not far away and that the bond between us is by no means snapped, for we are members of our Lord's body, of which it is written, "Not a bone of Him shall be broken."

Thus have I, according to my ability, set forth some of the points of this family union. May the Holy Spirit give us to know them for ourselves.

II. Let us now speak upon THE INSEPARABLENESS OF THIS UNION. "The *whole* family in heaven and earth," not the two families nor the divided family, but the *whole* family in heaven and earth. It appears at first sight as if we were very effectually divided by the hand of death. Can it be that we are one family when some of us labor on and others sleep beneath the greensward? There was a great truth in the sentence which Wordsworth put into the mouth of the little child when she said, "O master, we are seven."—

"'But they are dead: those two are dead!
Their spirits are in heaven!'
'Twas throwing words away, for still
The little maid would have her will,
And said 'No, we are seven.'"

Should we not thus speak of the divine family, for death assuredly has no separating power in the household of God. Like the apostle, we are persuaded that death cannot separate us from the love of God. The breach caused by the grave is only apparent—it is not real, the family is still united—for if you think of it, when there is a loss in a family the father is bereaved, but you cannot conceive of our heavenly Father's being bereaved. Our Father which art in heaven, You have lost none of Your children. We wept and went to the grave, but You did not, for Your child is not dead. Rather has Your child come closer unto Your bosom to receive a sweeter caress and to know more fully the infinity of Your love! When a child is lost from a family, the elder brother is a mourner, for he has lost one of his siblings, but our Elder Brother is not bereaved—Jesus has lost none of His. No, has He not, rather, brought home to Himself His own redeemed? Has He not rejoiced exceedingly to see His good work perfected in one whom He loved? There is no break towards the Father, and no break towards the Elder Brother, and therefore, it must be our mistake to fancy that there is any break at all. It cannot be that death divides our Israel—were not the tribes of Reuben and Gad and Manasseh one with the rest of Israel, though the Jordan rolled between? It is a *whole* family that redeemed household in heaven and in earth.

How little death prevents actual communion it is impossible for us to tell. Some attractive but worthless books have been written pretending to unfold to us the connection between departed spirits and ourselves. But I trust you will not be led into such idle speculations. God has not revealed these things to us and it is not for us to go dreaming about them, for we may dream ourselves into grievous errors if we once indulge our fancies. We know nothing about the commerce of the glorified with earth, but we do know that all departed saints are supremely blessed and that they are with Christ. And if they are with Christ, and we are with Christ, we cannot be far from each other. We meet all the saints of every age whenever we meet with God in Christ Jesus. In fellowship with Jesus you are come unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. It is impossible to restrict our communion with the people of God by the bounds of sect, race, country, or time, for we are vitally one with them all. Come, brothers and sisters, let us join our hands with those who have gone before, and let us, with equal love, join hands with those below, who before long will be numbered with the same company. Death has removed part of the family to an upper room, but we are still one family. There may be two brigades, but we are one army. We may feed in two pastures, but we are one flock. We may dwell awhile in separate habitations, but one homestead will, before long, receive us all.

As a matter which grows out of death, it may be well to say that *space* makes no inroads into the wholeness of the Lord's family. So far as spirits are limited to place, there must be a vast distance between the saint in heaven and the saint on earth. But we ought to remember that space, which seems vast to us, is not vast relatively, either as to God or to spiritual beings. Space is but the house of God, no, God comprehends all space and space, therefore, is but the bosom of the eternal. Space also is scarcely to be reckoned when dealing with spiritual beings. We can love and commune with those who are across the Atlantic with as much ease as we can have fellowship with those in the next house. Our friends in Australia, though on the other side of the world, are by no means too distant for our spiritual embrace. Thought flies more swiftly than electricity. Spirits defy space and annihilate distance. And we, in spirit, still meet with the departed in our songs of praise, rejoicing with them in our Lord Jesus Christ. Space does not divide—there are many mansions, but they are all in our Father's house.

And, dear brethren, it is such a great mercy that *sin*, that greatest of all separators, does not now divide us, for we are made near by the blood of Christ. When we think of those bright spirits before the throne of God, they seem to be of a superior race to us and we are half tempted to bow at their feet. But this feeling is rebuked in us, as it was in John, by the voice which said, "See you do it not. I am of your fellow servants, the prophets: worship God." They are one with us, after all, for they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—and

that is exactly what we have done. Beloved in Christ, we are already justified and accepted in the Beloved as much as the glorified. The veil is torn for us as well as for them. The dividing mountains of sin are overturned for us as well as for them; sinners as we are, we have access to God by the blood of Jesus—and with joy we draw near the throne of God. They have attained to perfection and we are following after. They see the Lord face to face, but we also, who are pure in heart, have grace given us to see God. The atoning blood has removed the middle wall and we are one in Christ Jesus.

Neither do *errors* and failures of understanding divide the family of God; if, indeed, they did, who among us could be of the same family as those who know even as they are known? The little child makes a thousand mistakes and his elder brethren smile sometimes, but they do not deny that he is their brother because he is so ignorant and childish. Even so, dear brothers and sisters, we know very little now. Like the apostle, we may each one say, "I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child." For now we see through a glass darkly and only know in part, but this does not disprove our kinship with those who see "face to face." We are of the same school, though on a lower form, and it is written, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." What they know they learned at those same feet at which we also sit.

Neither can *sorrow* separate us. Ah, they know no tears, their griefs and their toils are ended, but we must abide awhile in the stern realities of life's battle, to wrestle and to suffer. But it is evident that we are not divided from them, for we are all spoken of in one sentence as, "These are they that are coming out of great tribulation," for so the translation may run. Those who are already arrived and those who are on the way are described as one company. The sick child is of the same family as his brother in perfect health. Soldiers who are enduring the brunt of the battle are of the same army as those who have gained their laurels. To deny that your warring soldier is a part of the host would be a great mistake. To say that he is not of the army because he is in the midst of the conflict would be cruel and false. The saints militant are of the same host as the triumphant. Those who are suffering are of the same company as the beatified. None of these things part us—we are still one family in Christ Jesus. Who shall separate us?

III. A topic of deep interest now comes before us—THE PRESENT DISPLAY OF THE UNION. We have been speaking of our being one family, but perhaps it appears to you to be only a pleasing theory and therefore, we will notice certain points in which our unity practically appears.

I like to think, first, that the *service* of those who have departed blends with ours. I do not mean that they can descend to earth to preach and teach and labor. But I do mean this, that they being dead, yet speak. Their service projects itself beyond this life. A good man is not dead as to his influential life and real service for God as soon as the breath leaves his body. His work has a momentum in it which makes it roll on—his influence abides. "Even in their ashes live their known fires." A very large part of the power which the Holy Spirit gives to the church is found in

the form of influence derived from the testimonies and examples of departed saints. Today the church of God feels the influence of Paul and Peter. At this very moment, the work of the apostles is telling upon the nations. Is it not certain that the energetic souls of Luther and Calvin have left vital forces behind them which still throb and pulsate? Perhaps the Reformers are doing as much today as they did when they were alive. So each man, according to his talent and grace, leaves behind him not merely his arrow and his bow, his sword and his shield for other hands to use—but the arrows which he shot before he died are still flying through the air and the javelin which he hurled before his hand was paralyzed in death is yet piercing through the bucklers of the foe. The influence of my dear sister, Mrs. Bartlett, will operate upon some of you as long as you live—and you will transmit it to your successors. You Christians will be the more intense because of her glowing example—and you sinners will find it the harder to live in sin when you remember her tearful warnings. Some of you, I do not doubt, will be her posthumous children, born unto her after she has entered into her rest. Do not let the living think that they are the sole champions in this holy war, for, to all intents and purposes, the spirits of the just made perfect stand side by side with them. And the battle is being carried on, in no small measure, by cannon which they cast and weapons which they forged. Though the builders are absent in body, yet the gold, silver and precious stones which they builded, their Lord will establish forever.

Then again, we are one family in heaven and earth, and that very visibly, because the influence of *the prayers* of those in heaven still abides with us. Do not misunderstand me; I am no believer in the intercession of the saints above. I believe that they pray, but I believe it to be a damnable error to urge anyone to seek their intercession. What I mean is very different. I mean that prayers offered while they were here and unanswered in their lifetime still remain in the church's treasury of prayer. Many a mother dies with her children unsaved, but the prayers she continually offered for them will prevail after her death. Many a minister and many a private member pleads with God for blessing on the church and perhaps does not see it, but prayer must be answered—and 50 years afterwards it is possible that the church will reap the result of those supplications. Is not Scotland today the better and the holier for the prayers of John Knox? Is not England the brighter for the prayers of Latimer and Ridley? The august company of the glorified have ceased to kneel with us in person, but in effect they do so. They have gone to other work, but the incense which they kindled when they were below still perfumes the chambers of the church of God.

Further, our unity with them will be seen in this, that their *testimony* from above blends with ours. The church is ordained to be a witness. My brethren, we try to witness as God helps us to His truth as it is in Jesus, even as those who are above once witnessed with us here in life and in death. What a sweet witness dying Christians often bear when they cannot speak, in the gleam of the eyes, in the perfect rest of soul which others may well envy, enjoyed just in the moment when pain was most se-

vere and the flesh was failing. But now that these spirits have entered within the veil, do they cease their testimony? No. Hear them. They bear witness to the Lamb, saying, "For You were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood." They make known to angels and principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. We are engaged with them in revealing the abundant mercy and all-sufficiency of the Lord. You are comrades with us, you shining ones. You are fellow witnesses for Jesus and therefore you are one with us.

The main employment of saints above is *praise*. Beloved, what is ours but praise, too? Is it not well put by our poet—

"They sing the Lamb in hymns above,
And we in songs below"?

Their music is sweeter than ours, freer from discord and from all that is cold or wandering, but still, the theme is the same and the song springs from the same motive—and is worked in the heart by the same grace. I think I shall never praise my Lord in heaven more sincerely than I often praise Him now, when my mouth cannot speak, for the flooding of my soul's delight and joy in my God, who has taken me up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a Rock and established my goings, and put a new song into my mouth. The deep obligations of every day overwhelm me with indebtedness. I cannot but praise my God, when I think of dire necessities perpetually supplied, multiplied sin continually pardoned, wretched infirmity graciously helped. Yes, we are one family, because when holy worship goes up into the ears of the Eternal, our praise blends with the praise of those who are glorified above, and we are one.

Brethren, I believe we are one in some other points as well. Do you not rejoice over sinners? Is it not one of our holidays on earth when the prodigal returns? "Verily I say unto you there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." Do you ever cry out against sin and groan because of the power of error in the land? Know you not that the souls under the altar also cry with the same indignation, "O Lord, how long! Will You not judge and avenge Your own elect?" Do you not expect, each day, the coming of your Lord, and look for it with rapture? They also do the same. They say there is no hope in heaven, but who told them so? The saints, like ourselves, are looking for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Your joy, your desire, your hope—are not these the same as theirs before the throne of God?

Towering over all is the fact that *The Well-Beloved is the common joy of saints in heaven and on earth.* What makes *their* heaven? Who is the object of all their worship? Who is the subject of all their songs? In whom do they delight themselves all the day long? Who leads them to living fountains of waters and wipes all tears from their eyes? Beloved, He is as much all in all to us as He is to them. Jesus, *we* know You and *they* know You. Jesus, we love You and they love You. Jesus, we embrace You and they embrace You. Jesus, we are oftentimes lost in You, and they are

lost in You. Sun of our soul, life of our life, light of our delight, You are that to us which You are to them and herein we are all one.

IV. Last of all, there is to come, before long, A FUTURE MANIFESTATION OF THIS FAMILY UNION, much brighter than anything we have as yet seen. We are one family and we shall meet again. If they cannot come to us we shall go to them, by-and-by. It does not often happen that we carry to the grave one who is known to all this congregation, but seldom does a week pass but what one or other of our number, and frequently two or three, are taken home. I have to look upon you and upon myself as so many shadows. And when I meet you, how often does the question occur to me, "Who will go next?" Naturally, I think of some of you who have grown gray in your Master's service and have passed your threescore years and ten. You must go soon, my brothers and my sisters. And I know you are not grieved at the prospect. Yet the young as well as the old are taken home. And men in middle life, with the marrow moist in their bones, are removed, even as those who lean upon their staff for very age. Who knows but what *I* may leave you soon? My brother, who knows but that *you* may be called away? Well, in that blessed day when we leave the earth, we shall perceive that as we are free of the church below, we are citizens of the church above. Whenever some of us enter an assembly of believers, they recognize and welcome us—the same reception awaits us above! We shall be quite at home in heaven when we get there. Some of you have more friends in heaven than on earth. How few are left of your former friends, compared with the many who have gone above? In the day when you enter into heaven, you will perceive that the church is one family, for they will welcome you heartily and recognize in you a brother and a friend, and so, together with them, you shall adore your Lord.

Remember there is coming another day in which the family union of the church will be seen, and that is when the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised. It may be that we shall all be of the company of those who sleep and if so, when the trumpet sounds, the dead in Christ shall rise first, and we shall have our share in the first resurrection. Or, if our Lord should come before we die, we shall be "alive and remain." But we shall undergo a change at the same moment as the dead are raised, so that this corruptible shall put on incorruption. What a family we shall be when we all rise together and all the changed ones stand with us, all of one race, all regenerate, all clothed in the white robe of Jesus' righteousness! What a family! What a meeting it will be!

"How loud shall our glad voices sing,
When Christ, His risen saints shall bring
From beds of dust, and silent clay,
To realms of everlasting day."

Beloved, I cannot dwell upon what glory will follow on earth, but if our Lord shall live and reign on earth a thousand years, and if there shall be set up a great empire which shall outshine all other monarchies as much as the sun outshines the stars, we shall all share in it, for He will make us all kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign with Him upon the earth. Then, when comes the end, and He shall deliver up the kingdom to

God, even the Father, and God shall be all in all, we shall forever be with the Lord. My soul anticipates that grandest of all family meetings, when all the chosen shall assemble around the throne of God. It is but a little while and it shall come. It is but the twinkling of an eye and it shall all be matter of fact. We talk of time as though it were a far reaching thing. I appeal to you gray heads who know what 70 years mean—are they not gone as a watch in the night? Well, let the waiting be prolonged for 10,000 years, if the Lord pleases. The 10,000 years will end and then forever and forever we shall be as one family where Jesus is. This hope should cheer us. Death, where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory? Cheered by the prospect of an everlasting reunion, we defy you to sadden us! Encouraged by the glory which God has decreed, we laugh at your vain attempts to make breaches in the ranks of the one and indivisible family of the living God!

The practical point is—*Do we belong to that family?* I will leave that naked question to work in every heart. Do I belong to that family? Am I born of God? Am I a believer in Jesus? If not, I am an heir of wrath and not in the family of God.

If we do belong to the family, *let us show our relationship* by loving all the members of it. I should not like a brother to be gone to heaven and to reflect that I was unkind to him. I should not like to think that I might have smoothed his pathway, but I did not. Or I might have cheered him and refused. Dear brothers and sisters, we shall live together in heaven forever. Let us love each other fervently, now, with a pure heart. Help your poor brothers and sisters; cheer your desponding brothers and sisters. Let no man look only on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Brother, be brotherly. Sister, be a true sister. Let us not love in word only, but in deed and in truth, for we shall soon be at home together in our Father's house on high.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Revelation 7.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—872, 832, 859.

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A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 15, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself."
1 John 5:10.

IT is a part of the theory of Ritualism, that is to say, Anglicized Popery, that no man can know his sins forgiven unless he is assured so by a priest. They tell us that to know ourselves saved we must either have a revelation from heaven, which we may not expect, or we must wait till the day of judgement, or else some duly authorized "spiritual father" must pronounce us absolved. They cannot suppose any other method of being assured of forgiveness. That is the theory and in practice it comes to this, that when anything troubles your conscience you must make a clean breast of it to this, so-called, learned "minister," *alias* parish priest, and tell him whatever things you have done, answering all questions he may choose to put to you, whether they are clean or whether they are unclean. And only then will he give you absolution in the name of God, claiming to be—mark you, I am not saying what they do not say, for I quote from one of the most popular of their manuals, entitled, "Steps to the Altar"—claiming, I say, to be "a trustee from God, and commissioned by Him as His ministerial deputy, to hear, and judge, and absolve." That is the theory, a very attractive one too, to human nature, for man, by nature, is an idolater, that is to say, he desires something tangible and visible, to revere and trust in. The old spirit which cried out in the wilderness, "Make us gods to go before us, for as for this Moses which brought us up out of the land Egypt, we know not what has become of him," is still alive and craves for idols—and delights to find them either in the form of priests or sacraments. As for faith in the unseen purely spiritual worship, and simple reliance upon the promise of God, these are not according to human nature, and wherever you discover them, they are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Man's idolatry loves priestcraft and therefore, we should not be astonished if Ritualism were to become more and more popular and subjugate the whole land. Confidence in priestly powers seems to afford the soul an easy way of coming to an anchorage. To come directly to Jesus Christ with the whole heart needs thought, consideration, and heart work—but to confess to a priest and get his assurance of pardon is a method much less difficult, less spiritual, and consequently, more agreeable to human nature. What need is there of being born again from above when a little water will do it? What need is there of feeding upon Christ when bread and wine are the same thing? What need is there of the witness from above when every curate can assure you that

you are pardoned? What need is there, I ask, of the witness of the Holy Spirit, when any clerical person can pronounce you absolved?

I would in all kindness speak with those who are in bondage to this delusion and suggest a few questions. You think it more easy to believe in a man appointed by God than to believe in Christ Himself, but may there not be a doubt or two about the man? Is it not possible that he has not been rightly ordained, or that he himself when he speaks does not mean what he says? Remember, everything depends upon his ordination and intention. Do you say, "Oh, but he is certified by the church"? But are there not grave questions as to the church? Can apostolic succession be proven? It is the idlest of romances. The Church of Rome has struggled to prove her own descent from Peter, but fails at the very beginning—and we may be doubly sure that the Anglican Church is still more at sea. She calls the Nonconformists schismatic in reference to herself, but what is she in regard to the Church of Rome? She has no apostolic succession, in the sense in which the expression is ecclesiastically used, and should be ashamed of setting up the fraudulent presence. Her godly ministers have the same apostolic successor as all true servants of Christ have and no more. No man has such a pedigree as to entitle him to represent the eternal God and stand between the Father and men's souls. The claim is as gross an imposition as that of the fortuneteller who pretends to prophecy. Hark you, my friends, have you no manliness? Does it not seem to you, as it does to me, to be a monstrously degrading thing that you should prostrate yourselves before a man, like yourselves, and believe that he can pronounce the pardon of your sins? This precious, "Steps to the Altar," says, "Let the manner of your confession be in a humble posture, on your knees, as being made to God rather than man." Mark you this, you are to go down on your knees to the man whom the State appoints to superintend the religion of your parish. What is it but Brahmanism, mislabeled Christianity? The whole drift of the scheme is to elevate a clerical caste and lay all the rest of mankind at their feet. This is the reverse of the religion of the New Testament which says that all believers are a royal priesthood, made by the Lord Jesus kings and priests unto God. Is not Ritualism quite sure to grow into Popery, no, is it not full-blown Popery already? Will it not, once again, reduce the world to slavery under an arch-priest at Rome or Canterbury if it is allowed to have its way?

And what say the Scriptures? "There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." Why should we set up other mediators and go to them for absolution when our Lord Jesus receives all who come to Him? Do you see in the New Testament any trace of such assumptions on the part of God's ministers? Does the Gospel say, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, *if absolved by a priest*"? That interpolation is foreign to the Gospel. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved" is the Gospel according to the Scriptures. "Confess to the priest and you shall be forgiven" is the Gospel of the Vatican. Everywhere the Scripture calls man to come into personal contact with his reconciled God in Christ Jesus. The first resolution of the awakened sinner is, "I will

arise and go unto my Father." It is not, "I will arise and go unto the authorized minister who stands between me and my Father." It is not, "I will resort to sacraments and ceremonies," but, "I will go to my Father." In fact, the whole objective of the Gospel is to bring us near to God in Christ Jesus and to put down every interposing medium. He who rent the veil of the temple has ended this priestly business.

This morning my business is to show that there is no need of a certificate from any man as to our being forgiven, for *"He that believes has the witness within himself."* He does not need a new revelation. He does not need to wait till the Day of Judgment—he is forgiven, and he knows it, and knows it infallibly, too—by a witness which is within himself. Of that I shall speak, and may the Spirit of God help us to get at the real truth. Yes, I would to God that all who hear me this day would believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and have the witness of His salvation in themselves.

Let me, first of all, say a word or two about the way in which we are saved, the *modus operandi* of salvation, as we find it described in the Scriptures. Here it is in a nutshell. We have all broken God's law and we are justly condemned on account of it. God, in infinite mercy, desiring to save the sons of men, has given His Son, Jesus, to stand in the room, place, and stead of as many as believe in Him. Jesus became the substitute of His people and suffered in their stead, and for them the debt of punishment due to God was paid by Jesus Christ upon the cross of Calvary. All who believe in Him are, thereby, cleared before the bar of divine justice. Now, the Lord having given His Son has revealed this great fact in His Word. Here it is in this inspired Book—the full statement of it—to this effect, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life. This is God's testimony. We, who are here present, or at least the bulk of us, know that it is God's testimony and all we have to do in order to realize the result of Christ's passion is simply to believe the testimony of God concerning it and rest upon it. The argument runs thus—Christ saves those who trust Him. I trust Him and therefore, I am saved. Jesus Christ suffered for the sins of His people. His people are known by their believing in Him. I believe in Him and therefore, He died for my sins and my sins are blotted out. This is the summary of the transaction. God's testimony concerning His Son is at first believed, simply because God says so and for no other reason. And then there grows up in the soul other evidence not necessary to faith, but very strengthening to it—evidence which springs up in the soul as the result of faith, and is the witness referred to in our text—"He that believes has the witness in himself." There is no need for the intervention of any second or third party here. The man has trusted Christ and the Gospel for himself and proved it to be true—what service can that gentleman in a long coat render to him? What more evidence can he bring with his Prayer Book or without it? The matter is as clear as the sun. What is the need of his tallow candles?

We shall try to answer three questions today by the aid of our text—*How come we to be believers*? Secondly, *How know we that believers are saved*? And thirdly, *How know we that we are believers*?

I. HOW COME WE TO BE BELIEVERS? Beloved friends, you know how faith arises in the heart from the human point of view. We hear the Gospel, we accept it as the message of God, and we trust ourselves to it. So far it is our own work—and let it be remembered that in every case faith is and must be the act of man. The Holy Spirit never believes for anybody—each man must personally believe. We cannot be saved by the faith of another, even though that other would be divine. Each one of us must himself believe. But having said that, let us remember that the Godward history of our believing is quite another thing, for true faith is always the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings us to perform the act of faith by which we are saved and the process is after this manner, though varying in different individuals—first, we are brought *attentively to listen* to the old, old story of the cross. We have heard it a great many times, perhaps, but now we hear with opened ears, anxiously desiring to know the inner sense. While we are so listening, the Word commends itself to us—it awes us by its majesty of holiness. It attracts us by its beauty of love and we perceive that it is truly the Word of God. Thus, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Attentive hearers, earnestly listening, very seldom remain unbelievers long. The superficial hearer, who is satisfied to sit through a sermon but does not care to understand it, misses the blessing. The diligent reader of the Bible, reading it with prayer, is very unlikely to remain unsaved—before long the Spirit of God, who works through the Word, applies some portion or other of Holy Scripture to the soul with power—and the reader is brought to faith. We believe, then, not because a clerical person or a crowd of clerics assure us that the Bible is inspired, but because the Spirit of God, working with the Word, commends it to our consciences and to our understandings and therefore, we believe. You will generally find that unbelievers do not read the Bible, and do not hear the Gospel—how can they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? If they will not consider the Gospel candidly, how can they expect to believe it?

Further, *the Holy Spirit is also pleased to make us conscious of our sinfulness*, our danger, and our inability. And this is a great way towards faith in Christ, for the great difficulty in believing in Jesus is that men believe in themselves. But when they discover that their lives, which they thought commendable, are censurable—and when they find out that their native strength is feebleness itself—they are, then, prepared to believe in God's salvation. When a man can no longer rely upon himself, he cries to the strong for strength. Thus the Spirit of God leads us to faith by driving us out of self-confidence.

Moreover, while attentively hearing, *we perceive the suitability of the Gospel to our case*. We feel ourselves sinful and rejoice that our great Substitute bore our sin, and suffered on its account, and we say, "That substitution is full of hope to me; salvation by an atonement is precisely

what I desire. My conscience can rest here." We learn that Jesus came by water, to cleanse our nature as well as to take away our guilt, and we say, "That also meets my need." Studying the great doctrine of the cross, it strikes us as being full of the wisdom and love of God, and as suitable for our case as bread is suitable for hunger, or water for thirst. And our moral instincts, by an inner witness which we cannot further describe, leap to the conclusion that this must be true and therefore, we believe it. You see, first we give an attentive hearing to the Gospel, then we receive, by the Spirit of God, a consciousness of our need of it, and then we discover the suitability of it to meet our need. And by that process, we are led onward to genuine faith in Christ.

There is but one more step, and that is, *we accept Jesus as set forth in the Gospel* and place all our trust in Him. He is set forth as the Savior of mankind, bringing life and peace to all who trust Him. We hear a voice that says, "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." We see the Savior Himself standing with outstretched arms and crying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." And being assured of the freeness as before we were of the suitability of the atonement, we accept it and thus we exercise the faith of God's elect. We have gone through a process which has divorced us from every other confidence and brought us to rest on that which God has set forth to be a propitiation, even the finished work, the blood and righteousness of Christ.

When the soul accepts the Lord Jesus as Savior, *she believes in Him as God,* for she says, "How can He have offered so glorious an atonement had He not been divine? How could God set Him forth to make propitiation for the sons of men had He not been equal to the task, a task requiring an infinite nature?" We worship the Son of God. In Him we rest and on Him we lean. We find in Him all that we need. This is why we believe then, and the process is a simple and logical one. The mysterious Spirit works us to faith, but the states of mind through which He brings us follow each other in a beautifully simple manner.

Now, in all this I see no room for a priest at all. For the preacher, there is a niche, for, "How can they hear without a preacher?" But the priest with his authority as an interpolation, like the fifth wheel of a steam engine, he is of no possible service and a good deal in the way. He deserves to be called "a superfluity of naughtiness." God's Word convinces my reason, and God's Spirit wins my heart to faith in Jesus—what more under heaven do I need as a reason for faith? That gentleman with the gown on has no more to do with the business than if he did not exist. His intervention to tell me, by authority, that the Gospel is true and that I am absolved, is as ridiculous as the conduct of that little African potentate who, as soon as he has eaten the few morsels of carrion which adorn his majestic table, bids a herald proclaim east, west, north, and south, that all other kings in the world are now permitted, by his gracious majesty, to have their dinners. Probably they have never heard of the permission and have suffered no evil from being ignorant of it. Who is this fellow that he should take so much upon himself? Having been brought to rest in Jesus as my Savior by a perfectly reasonable process, by a chain of ar-

gument in which not one link is deficient, I care nothing whatever for any official confirmation from the gentleman in the gown, who has no argument, but bids me believe because he has been ordained. I need no confirmation of what God speaks. Twice two will be four whether the parish priest says so or not, and God's testimony is true quite independently of *all* the gowns and surplices in and out of the robe-maker's shop. If Her Majesty should give me the title deeds of an estate, signing the transfer with her own hand and seal, I should smile at the lackey who should kindly offer to add his authority to her Majesty's act and deed. Where the word of a king is, there is power, and this is preeminently true where the Word of the King of kings is concerned. I have believed in Jesus Christ as He is set forth on the authority of God Himself, and who are you, Sir Priest, to come between me and God? You tell the penitent, "You are to look upon the priest, as he is trustee from God, and commissioned by Him as His ministerial deputy, to hear and judge and absolve you." Away with such blasphemous falsehood! We want no deputies, for we have Christ Himself. You and your authority may go packing.

II. Secondly, HOW KNOW WE THAT BELIEVERS ARE SAVED? That seems to be a grave question with some. "I trust Jesus, I believe in Him with all my heart, but am I saved?" My dear friend, you ought not to raise that question, for it is finally settled by divine authority. But as you do raise it, let us answer it for you very briefly. We know and are sure that every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is saved because God says so, and is not that enough? *God declares in His Word*, even in that sure Word of testimony—where you will do well to take heed as unto a light that shines in a dark place—that every believer in Jesus Christ is saved. The passages in which this is stated are far too many for us to quote them all. Only let us note that memorable one at the close of Mark's Gospel, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned." The believer is saved. You have in those verses God's Word for it. True, the believer is bound to profess his faith by baptism, which follows upon his faith—but the second sentence shows that the faith is the all-important matter, for it is added—"He that believes not shall be damned." Faith is the vital thing which, if omitted, will involve damnation. How the whole of John's Gospel teems with this truth. Turn to the blessed third of John and see how wondrously clear it is. In the 16th verse, for instance—"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Read the 18th verse—"He that believes on Him is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Follow on to the 36th verse, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." Can anything be more plain and positive? Assuredly, he that believes in Jesus is a saved man. Turn to the 10th chapter of Romans. I shall only give you passages in which the truth is conspicuous as the sun in the heavens. Paul says, beginning in the fourth verse—"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes; for Moses describes

the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which does those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (That is to bring Christ down from above) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart (that is, the word of faith, which we preach) that if you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead you shall be saved." Paul rejects all idea of salvation by works and lays all the stress upon believing in a risen Savior. To the same purpose speaks the apostle in Romans 1:16—"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith." This, indeed, is the great reason why the Bible is written, that we may believe on the Lord Jesus and have life through His name. And so John tells us in the 20th chapter of his Gospel at the 31st verse. Don't you see then, brothers and sisters, if you believe in Jesus you are saved? And you can be sure that it is so because God declares it. If we, from now on, had no other witness, is not the witness of the Lord sufficient? It seems to me to be the essence of unbelief for a man to need a minister to tell him that if he believes he is saved, when God solemnly affirms that it is so. I could not conceive myself so forsaken of God as to assume that I could assure my fellow man of his pardon and affect to pronounce absolution by authority committed to me. Surely this would be presumption to be answered for at the last great day. God forgive those who are guilty of it.

Again, we know on the authority of Scripture that believers are saved because *the privileges which are ascribed to them prove that they are in a saved condition*. Let us read in John again. John goes to the very root of every matter and in chapter 1:12 he tells us, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." See, brethren, everyone that believes on the name of Jesus is a son of God—and how can a son of God be a lost soul? Will He cast away His own children? God forbid! In the same Gospel, chapter 5:24, Christ Himself tells us, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears My word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." He is gone out then of the region of death and condemnation into that of life and acceptance, and surely no one will say that such a man is not saved. Our Lord tells us, too, that everyone that believes in Him has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, which could not be if he were not saved. Look at John, chapter 7:38-39—"He that believes on me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water. This He spoke of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive." So that the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer, and where the Holy Spirit abides, salvation is certainly enjoyed. Our Lord also promises the resurrection to every believer. Read John 11:25, that glorious passage in which Jesus said to

Martha, "I am the resurrection, and the life. He who believes in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" Resurrection to eternal life is not the portion of the unsaved, for they "shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on them." You see that John's Gospel is rich with this precious doctrine. Nor does he alone thus reveal the blessed results of faith. Paul also speaks of these privileges in all his epistles. If you turn back to the Romans, how full that epistle is of the same truth, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord by whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." You remember the passage we read just now in the epistle of John—"This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith," so that faith brings us victory from day to day, even as faith at the very outset brings us remission of sin as the apostle tells us in the Acts 10:43. But I need not multiply proof texts—it would require several sermons to sum up the privileges of believers—privileges quite inconsistent with the idea that a believer can be an unsaved man. You can find these for yourselves, for they are as plentiful in Scripture as ears of corn in harvest. There are such privileges ascribed to believers everywhere as could not be ascribed to them if they were not saved souls.

Once again, the *whole tone of Scripture regards the believer as a saved man*. "Believers" is a common synonym for saints, for sanctified persons. And it is a truth to say the epistles are written to believers, for they are written to the churches, and churches are but assemblies of believers. The Lord looks upon men as divided into believers and unbelievers—and between these two there is a gulf of difference as great as that between the Israelites and the Egyptians in the day when the pillar gave light to Israel but darkness to the hosts of Egypt. Do you believe in Jesus? You are in the favor of God. Do you not believe in Him? Then no priest can help you, nor can you help yourself. You are lost and ruined and undone. The only way of escape is that you believe in Jesus Christ.

Brethren, when the Word of God tells us so positively that having believed we are saved, can you see any earthly use in going to a person who says he is authorized of God, and asking him whether you are saved or not? I cannot, for one. I think it far easier, by God's grace, to believe in Jesus than to believe in these begowned and bedizened clerics. And to believe in Jesus, and in them too, is like seeing by the light of the sun aided by the lamp of the glowworm. What can the little men be at? In the bad old times in the South, a free Negro was forced to carry his papers about with him, but in that blessed day when the jubilee trumpet sounded, and every African throughout the States was free, I can hardly imagine some little squire or country judge saying to the emancipated Negro, "Sam, I will make out papers for you, and for your consolation I will put my name, 'Jeremiah Stiggins,' at the bottom." Why, the emancipated man would have said, "I have seen the proclamation which has the name of Abraham Lincoln, the President of the United States, at its foot, and I do not care a button for your name or anybody else's." Having believed in

the Lord Jesus, I have salvation upon the authority of the Word of God, and on the Holy Spirit's authority I know that there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, and therefore I would not thank an angel for his oath if he tendered it in confirmation. When the little man in the surplice comes to me and says, "I will give you a certificate that you are absolved," I reply, "I am very much obliged to you, but there are softer heads than mine, and you had better exercise your arts upon them. You cannot excite in me any feeling but that of pity, bordering on contempt." Before God the whole business is blasphemy, and before Christian men it is foolery and worse.

III. The last point is this, HOW DO WE KNOW THAT WE ARE BELIEVERS? It is clear that if we are believers we are saved, but how do we know that we are believers?

First of all, as a general rule, *it is a matter of consciousness*. How do I know that I breathe? How do I know that I think? How do I know that I believe that there was once a Saxon Heptarchy? I know I do, and that is enough. Faith is, to a large extent, a matter of consciousness. A man is not always conscious of what is true, for a man might be in such a weak condition that he might say, "I hardly know whether my heart beats," and yet it will be beating all the time. Doubts may arise, and will—but as a general rule—faith is a matter of consciousness. I live, and if you ask me for proof I reply, "I know I do." I believe, and if you ask me how I know it, I reply, "I am sure I do."

Still, there is other evidence. How do I know that I am a believer? Why, by *the very remarkable change* which I underwent when I believed. For when a man believes in Jesus Christ, there is such a change worked in him that he must be aware of it. As in the case of the blind man when his eyes were opened he said, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." That poor woman who had the issue of blood so many years—when she touched Christ's garment and was healed, how did she know it? We read that she felt in herself that she was made whole. She had touched the hem of the Lord's garment and was recovered—and in the same way the believer knows that he has believed. Suppose a child was born in a coal pit and has seen no light except that of the candles down below, and that he is suddenly taken up the shaft to see the sun, the green fields, and the sweet spring flowers? What a surprise! I cannot wonder if the child should think itself dreaming. But if you were to say to it, "Are you out of the coal pit? Can you prove that you are?" Why, notwithstanding that the child would hardly know where it was because of its vast surprise, yet would it be sure that it was out of the darkness—convinced by an argument within itself which nobody could refute. So do we know, brothers and sisters, that we are born again, for we feel a new life and live in a new world. Things we never dreamed of before we have realized. I remember one, who, when he was converted said, "Well, either the world is new or else I am." This change is to us strong evidence that faith is in us and has exercised its power.

Brethren, we have further evidence that we believe, for *our affections are altered*. The believer can say that the things he once loved, he now

hates, and the things he hated, he now loves; that which gave him pleasure, now causes him pain. And things which were irksome and unpleasant have now become delightful to him. Especially is there a great change in us with respect to God. We said in our hearts, "No God." Not that we dared say, "There is no God," but we wanted to get away from Him. We would have been glad to hear that there was no God. But now, how altered are our affections. Now our greatest joy is God. The nearer we can approach Him, the better. The very sound of His name is delicious music to us. We know that this change was produced by our believing in Him, of that we are confident, for the matter is clear. A certain master had a servant whose mind was very much poisoned against him by slanderous tales. Everything the master did the servant misconstrued because he considered him to be a tyrant and an oppressor. Now it came to pass that this servant, one day, learned more concerning his master, and found out that everything he had done was dictated by the most generous motives and that his master, indeed, was one of the excellent of the earth. The moment that servant's thoughts of his master changed and he had faith in his goodness, he acted very differently, as you may well conceive. None could be more faithful and diligent than he. Now, we prove that we believe because we feel towards God so very differently. He is loved in our inmost souls and we delight to serve Him. This would have been utterly impossible if we had not been changed in our feelings toward Him by being led to trust Him.

We know, also, that we believe because, though very far from perfect, *we love holiness and strive after purity*. You that have believed in Jesus, do you not now pant after holiness? Do you not endeavor to do that which is right? And when you are conscious that you have failed, does not conscience prick you? Have you not gone on your knees in bitterness of soul and said, "My God, help me and deliver me, for I delight in Your commandments. Help me to keep Your statutes"? Right, truth, and peace are the things we now seek after, whereas time was when these were of small account, and our own selfish pleasure and our own perverted judgement were the rule of our being. By this change of conduct we know that we have believed in Jesus Christ.

And my dear brothers and sisters, we know that we have believed in Jesus Christ because now *we have communion with God.* We are in the habit of speaking with God in prayer and hearing the Lord speak with us when we read His Word. Some of us have spoken with our Lord Jesus so often that we have grown to be near and dear friends—and whatever we ask in prayer He grants us. Answered prayers are sweet testimonies to faith. When the Lord is pleased to deliver us out of trouble ,when His Holy Spirit cheers us in depression, when He helps us under difficulties, when He makes us patient under pain—all these things become proofs that we have real faith in Him. Our faith has realized Him and brought Him near. It has taught us how to live upon Him and so strengthened us in His ways.

Once more only upon this point, and then we will come to the practical application. We know that we have believed in the Lord Jesus be-

cause we have, over and above all this, a secret something, indescribable to others, but well-known by ourselves, which is called in Scripture, the *witness of the Holy Spirit*—for it is written, "The Spirit Himself also bears witness with our spirit that we are born of God." First, our spirit bears witness to our new birth, and then the Spirit of God comes in and bears witness with our spirit to the same effect. Do you know what it means? If you do not, I cannot tell you. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." There comes stealing over the soul, sometimes a peace, a joy, a perfect rest, a heavenly deliciousness, a supreme content in which, though no voice is heard, yet we are conscious that it is there rushing through our souls, like a strain of heaven's own music, the witness of the Spirit of God. We are sure of it, as sure as we are of our own being. And by that witness we know that we are indeed believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now mark, we may not ask for any witness beyond the testimony of God, nor will any other witness be given. I charge all of you here present not to say, "I will believe in God when I obtain the inward witness." No, you are bound to believe in God first, on the sure testimony of His Word. If you believe His Word you shall know the sweets of divine grace. To ask for more evidence first is as though a man should say, "Here is a medicine prepared by a physician of great repute, and it is said to be very powerful for driving out the disease from which I suffer. I will take it as soon as I see that I am improving by its means." The man has lost his reason, has he not? He cannot expect even a partial cure till he has taken the medicine. He cannot expect the result to come before the cause. You must take the good Physician's medicine as a matter of faith and afterwards, your faith will be increased by the beneficial result. You must believe on the Lord Jesus, because of the witness of God concerning Him, for that is all the witness you ought to wish for and all that God will give you. After you have believed, other witnesses will spring up in your soul, as the results of faith. And so your confidence will be strengthened. But just now, beloved, believe in Jesus Christ, and having believed in Him you shall know that you are forgiven for His name's sake.

In closing, let me ask every person here, do you believe in Jesus Christ or not? If you believe, you are saved. If you believe not, you are condemned already, because you have not believed. Remember that.

Let me next ask, are any of you seeking after any witness beyond the witness of God? If you are, do you not know that you are virtually making God a liar? For if God says such-and-such a thing is true, and you seek further evidence beyond His Word, you do, in effect, say that God's witness is not sufficient and that God is a liar. I pray you behave not so insolently. Accept His naked Word, for it is surer than the sight of the eyes or the hearing of the ears. Behold how the arch of heaven stands without a single pillar, vast as it is—what sustains it but the Word of God? See how this round world hangs on nothing and yet strays not from her sphere—what maintains her in her course but the bare Word of God? That Word which rolls the stars along and has never failed to fulfill its purpose, is that on which you are asked to lean. Sinner, will you believe

your God? If you will, you shall be established, blessed, and enriched. But if you still say He is a liar, then you shall be as the heath in the desert which shall not see when good comes, but suffers perpetual drought. If you rest in Jesus, trusting Him, you have done well, but yet you have only done Him justice. There is no merit in believing what is true. Who but a man of base heart would refuse to do so? To believe One who cannot lie is by no means a meritorious action and therefore, salvation is by faith that it may be by grace. Yet faith will bring to you life, love, joy, peace, immortality, and all that heaven can mean.

May God grant you grace to believe. But I pray you do not let the little man in robes stand between you and Christ. Let no one do so. I charge you, never regard anything I say as having any authority in it apart from the Word of God. I reckon it of all crimes the greatest for a man to assume to mediate between men and God. Little as I respect the devil, I prefer him to a priest who pretends to forgive sins. For even the devil has too much honesty about him to pretend to give absolution in God's name. There is but one pardoning Priest and He is the Son of the Highest. His one sacrifice has ended all other sacrifices. His one atonement has rendered all future oblations counterfeit. Today, as Elijah stood on Carmel and cried out against the priests of Baal, so would I. I count no words too severe. If my very speech should be a thunderbolt and every word a lightning flash, it would not be too strong to protest against the accursed system which once degraded the whole earth to kiss the Pope's foot and is degrading our nation still, and that through a so-called Protestant church. Oh, God Almighty, God of Latimer and Ridley, God of the martyrs, whose ashes are still among us, will You allow this people to go back, again, to false gods, and saints, and virgins, and crucifixes, relics, and cast clouts and rotten rags? For to this also will they come if Your grace does not prevent it. Oh, my hearers, Jesus is the only Savior of the sons of men. Believe in Him and live. This is the only Gospel. At your peril reject it. I pray you receive it for Christ's sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—I. John 5.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—554, 239, 232.

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THE SACRED LOVE-TOKEN
NO. 1251

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 22, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the blood shall be to you for a token."
Exodus 12:13.

You remember that last Sabbath morning we spoke upon the witness within the child of God. We tried to show that believers did not need any man to assure them that they are forgiven, that they could get on exceedingly well without absolution from a priest and could know their salvation altogether apart from the ghostly father, seeing that they have the evidence of it in their own souls by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall not think or speak much of that miserable impostor, the priest, this morning, for he really is not worth thinking of. But we shall continue our consideration of the witness which the Lord has given to His believing people concerning their safety in Jesus Christ. May the Holy Spirit help us while we meditate upon the most vital of all subjects, which lies at the very heart of true religion.

There are some, as we have said, who desire a token of their safety from man—a poor thing when they get it and not worth asking for. And there are others who desire it from God in the form of a sign or a wonder, or else they will not believe. "Show me a token for good" is a prayer which is often used in a very mistaken sense. They desire some special transaction of providence, or remarkable dream, or singular feeling. But God says to all those who desire a token for good, "The blood shall be to you for a token." What more can we desire? All the squadrons of the angelic host could not better assure us if each one brought a message from heaven. The best of all evidences of divine love is the cross. The strongest of all assurances of safety, the surest of all pledges of favor, the best token of grace that a man can possibly behold is the sprinkled blood by which he is cleansed from sin. "The blood shall be to you for a token."

Before we dive into this subject, let us notice that the blood which was a token to God's people was not merely that which had been shed by the sacrifice of all unblemished lambs, but blood which had been caught in a basin, had been taken by the person at the head of the household in his own hands and recognized as shed for him. Then a bunch of hyssop was laid to soak in a basin and afterwards the blood was sprinkled upon the lintel and the doorposts—this blood, thus appropriated, was the token. By an appropriating faith, we must take Christ to be ours. We must, in a word, believe in the atonement which He has made, for atonement which is not believed in is no atonement to us. Our Lord Jesus laid down His

life for us, but He that believes not in Him shall by no means partake of any of the blessings of His death.

The *sprinkled* blood preserved the houses of the Israelites and it is the blood of Jesus accepted by us, relied upon, and applied to our consciences which delivers us from death. This sprinkling, moreover, was done in a very public manner. They stained the lintel and the two side posts, so that every passerby might see it, yes, and must see it. So salvation is premised not alone to believing, but to confession with the mouth. "He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him shall be saved." And so the grand commission at the end of the Gospel by Mark puts it, not "He that believes shall be saved," but "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." For if we believe in Christ we must not be ashamed of Him. Shame about faith would argue insincerity of faith. True faith in the Savior is so potent a principle of our lives that it must be seen whether we publish it or not—and we must be willing that it should be seen. Yes, this should be the most visible point in our lives—our glory and our delight—that we do, indeed, believe in the Savior Jesus Christ. Oh, that every one of you, my dear hearers, used the cross for its proper purpose. I grieve that any among you should need to have it asked of you—

"Is it nothing to you, oh you that pass by,
Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?"

The Lamb is slain, but you have never caught the blood, you have never sprinkled it with the hyssop of faith and consequently, you are not saved. Oh that each one of you could say, "My faith is resting in the substitutionary work of Jesus." I could indeed sing that blessed hymn just now, and I drank it in with all my heart. And I heartily wish you could all sing it, too—

"Complete atonement You have made
And to the utmost farthing paid
Whatever Your people owed:
Nor can His wrath on me take place,
If sheltered in Your righteousness,
And sprinkled with Your blood."

Now, to the text. The blood of Jesus Christ is to Christians a token and in order to bring out the whole sense we must have five words—it is a *distinguishing token*, an *assuring token*, a *significant token*, a *love-token*, and a *recognition token*.

I. First, then, the blood shall be to you for a token, A DISTINGUISHING TOKEN. You could tell where the Israelite dwelt, for the blood-mark was there that night. You knew the Egyptian's abode, for he knew nothing of the token. Nothing so truly distinguishes Christians as the blood of Jesus Christ. Where the blood is not believed in, nor prized, you have dead Christianity, for "the blood is the life thereof." A bloodless Gospel is a lifeless Gospel. If the atonement is denied or frittered away, or put into a secondary place, or obscured—in that proportion, the life has gone out of the religion which is professed. But we, brethren, bear this distinguishing token, the mark of the blood. Our religion is, in many respects,

a very singular one—one open to a world of objection and ridicule from carnal minds. It is one which always has been criticized and always will be, for we believe, first, that *our sin deserves death*. We do not believe transgression to be a trifle, or a mere misdemeanor of the first class. We know it to be a capital offense deserving the death penalty. When the Lord says, "The soul that sins, it shall die," our conscience says, "Amen," to the sentence of the Most High. The blood on the doorpost meant that those who dwelt there confessed that they deserved to die as much as others and would have done so had it not been for the paschal lamb. The crimson mark was virtually a confession of deserving death. So every believer feels that his sin is great and grievous, terrible and overwhelming. He does not subscribe to theories which make little of man's guilt. He has no ear for those who try to mitigate the penalty and endeavor to make the guilt appear small. He does not call sin a mistake, a failure or a lapse. I think I have heard all those words, lately, used about sin, by those who say, "Poor unhappy man. So mistaken, seeking after the light and crying after God in the dark. How sad that he should stumble. Surely God will not be so harsh as to punish him forever." Such talk has no charm for us. We admit the heinous criminality of sin and the justice of the awful sentence which declares that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment. Our God is just and takes vengeance on iniquity. The God who smote all the first-born of Egypt and overthrew Pharaoh in the Red Sea, is the God whom we adore. And as we bow before Him, we admit that He might righteously have smitten us also and have utterly destroyed us. For us the blood-mark is virtually an acknowledgment that we have the sentence of death in ourselves and dare not trust in ourselves.

We are singular enough to believe in *substitution*. The blood upon the lintel said, "Someone has died here instead of us." We also hold and rest in the truth that Christ died, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." We believe, "He was made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." The belief in the greatness of sin distinguishes Christians from Pharisees and all other self-justifiers. And the belief in substitution separates Christians from all those philosophic adulterators of the Gospel who are willing to hold up Christ's example, but cannot endure His expiatory sacrifice. They will speak to you of Christ's spirit and the power of His teaching, but reject His vicarious death. We do not subscribe to the lax theology which teaches that the Lord Jesus did something or other which, in some way or other, is in some degree or other connected with the salvation of men. We hold as vital truths that He stood in His people's place and for them endured a death which honored the justice of God and satisfied His righteous laws. We firmly believe that He bore the penalty due to sin, or that which, from the excellence of His person, was fully equivalent thereto. My brothers and sisters, this is and always will be assailed, but it is the keystone of the Gospel arch. As at Waterloo, all the battle seemed to rage around the chateau of Hugoumont, so does the conflict center around the doctrine of

the atoning death of our great Substitute—and we are not going to shift our ground for a moment—nor adopt any other phraseology. We stand to the literal substitution of Jesus Christ in the place of His people and His real endurance of suffering and death in their place. And from this distinct and definite ground we will not move an inch. Even the term, "*the blood*," from which some shrink with the affectation of great delicacy, we shall not cease to use, no matter who may take offense at it, for it brings out that fundamental truth which is the power of God unto salvation. We dwell beneath the blood-mark and rejoice that Jesus poured out His soul for us unto death when He bore the sins of many.

But we believe more—and what will seem very strange to some—we believe that *we died in Jesus*. The Israelite knew that when the angel went through Egypt he meant to exact a life at every house, and so he exhibited the blood, as much as to say, "The first-born is dead here." The lamb had died instead of the first-born and virtually, the first-born is dead, and there is no cause for smiting, because the smiting has been done. So when Jesus died His elect died in Him and their sins received the vengeance due in that day when on the accursed tree He yielded up His life a ransom for many. How can we die? We are already dead in Him and have been buried with Him by virtue of our union with His blessed person. This is a most precious truth and those who hold it are thereby distinguished from the rest of mankind.

Believing this, we next come to the conclusion that *we are safe*, for when the Hebrew had struck the blood upon the door-posts of his house, he went in to feast, not to fret—he went into the house to eat the lamb whose blood had been sprinkled—and to stand at the table with his loins girt about, expecting not to die, but to go forth to a land which the Lord his God would give to him. This is the distinguishing mark of a Christian that he knows himself to be saved and therefore, he keeps the feast rejoicing in the Lord. And standing with his loins girt, he is expecting soon to be called away to the land which the Lord his God has given to him, that he may inherit and dwell there forever. Other men are not saved, nor dare they profess that they are. They acknowledge that they have a great deal to do before they will be saved—present salvation they know not. Or if they think they are saved, yet they dream that their continued salvation depends upon themselves—there is still something needed besides the sprinkled blood. The Israelite wanted nothing but the blood—he was perfectly satisfied with that, and so is the believer. He has believed in Christ as dying in his stead. He is delighted to know that he is complete in Him and accepted in the Beloved. He waits till the summons shall come and he shall be called to ascend to the glory land where Christ has gone to prepare a place for him.

The Israelite in Egypt made this distinction prominent. As we have already said, he put it upon upper part of his door and upon the two side posts, too. We read in the Revelation that those who received the mark of the beast sometimes bore it in their forehead, but sometimes also on their right hand, while he who had the mark of God always received it on

his forehead, never on his right hand where it could be hidden within the palm. It has been very well remarked that there is a back door to hell, but there is none to heaven. The way to heaven is the king's highway, a way which is not made for concealment, but for honest travelers who have nothing to hide. Believers must be seen, for they are the lights of the world. Yet there are some who try to go to heaven up the back stairs and serve the Lord only by night. It must not be. Strike the blood where all can see it, and let men know that you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice. Whether they like it or no, let them know that this is all your salvation and all your desire. I had the pleasure of riding into the Leonine city in Rome a short time after the Italian troops had taken possession, and I noticed that every house had marked up, most conspicuously, the arms of the kingdom of Italy and the name of Victor Emmanuel. They were not content to have it over their doors, but all over the front of the houses you read, "Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy," showing that they were right glad to escape from the dominion of the Pope and to avow their allegiance to a constitutional king. Surely if for a human monarch and the earthly freedom which he brought men could thus set up his escutcheon everywhere, you and I who believe in Jesus are bound to exhibit the blood-red token and to keep it always conspicuous. Let others believe the priest, we believe Jesus. Let others trust their works, we trust the sprinkled blood. Let others rely on frames and feelings, discipline and development, we believe in Jesus Christ and Him only. And we nail to the mast the blood-red banner of the atoning sacrifice.—

"My faith is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

Thus much, then, upon the blood as the *distinguishing token*.

II. Now, secondly, the blood was an ASSURING TOKEN. When we mean to do a special kindness for a friend it may be we say to him, "That you may be sure I shall do it, here is a token of my faithfulness." God gave to His people the blood of sprinkling as the token that He would preserve them safely. And surely, the more the Israelite studied that token, the more at ease would he be, for he would say, "God has appointed this unblemished lamb to take our place, and seeing that He appointed it, and the lamb has been slain, we are sure He will not run back from the substitution which He has Himself ordained, so we are perfectly safe." Now, I want you for a few minutes, especially you who have any doubts and fears, to look upon the blood of Christ and see its suitableness to be an assuring token to your consciences. Remember, first, what it was—blood, *the token of suffering*. Your sin deserves suffering. Christ has suffered for sin. Think what suffering He endured, what contradiction of sinners, and what forsaking of His Father. Suffer no one to depreciate the physical sufferings of Christ, but still, remember that His mental sufferings were greater. His soul sufferings were the soul of His suffer-

ings. Go to dark Gethsemane, go to shameful Gabbatha, go to deadly Golgotha and as you see your Lord and mark that wondrous spectacle of woe, will you not feel that He can put away your sin and that if He so terribly suffered, you need not suffer? God has accepted an expiation worthy of His justice. That heaven-rending cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" shows how keen were the pangs with which our hope was born.

Think, further—*blood* signifies not only suffering but *death*—for our Lord could only put away sin by actually dying. All His tears, all His holy living, all His painful sufferings even could not recompense for sin till the death penalty was paid, for death was that which God had appointed as the reward of sin, and Jesus died. Oh see Him die—see HIM die! Was ever such a spectacle? Every drop that distils from His pierced hands cries aloud, "Safety for the believer! The ransom price is paid." That gash in His side, like the mouth of love, speaks eloquently to our hearts, "Pardon, acceptance, eternal love!" I cannot see that bowed head, those eyes glazed in death and that dear body taken down to be laid in the tomb without feeling, "If Christ has died, then there must be boundless mercy for the guilty sons of men." Think of it and I pray God the Holy Spirit to lead you to see the sweetness and comfort which lie in this token.

Remember, too, that you rest, not merely on suffering and death, but on the excellence of the person so suffering and dying. Ask *whose suffering and death it is?* In the Israelites' case it was an unblemished lamb. In your case and mine, it is the spotless Lamb of God. Oh, brethren, think of the life of Jesus in its innocence and unselfishness. Was ever such a life; was ever such a death of such a sacred person? He was God, "very God of very God." Those hands that were pierced had healed the sick with their touch. And those nailed feet had trod the sea! Those eyes, all closed in death, had looked into men's hearts and those silent lips had spoken miracles. It was God Himself who on the bloody tree offered expiation for sin against Himself. There must be power in such a death as that to put away sin. Do you not admit that it must be so? Is not the token full of comfort to you?

Think, again, that it was not merely the lamb, but it was *the Lamb of God*. That is to say, when the Israelite killed the lamb, he was doing what God commanded him to do, and when Jesus died in our place, He did not die as an amateur Savior, but as one *appointed by God*. Now, if God appointed the atonement, He must accept it. Surely if *He* said that Christ should die in our place, if *He* "laid upon Him the iniquity of us all," then the atonement must be accepted since God Himself set it forth, provided it, and ordained it. How sweetly do I rest in this; I feel, when I look up to my dear Lord, and I desire evermore to do so, as if I could say to the justice of God, "What can You do against me? Do I not present to You all You can demand—a death? I bring before You a death which You did appoint to be instead of my death? If You have appointed it, I know You will not refuse it." This is one of the sweetest parts of the whole matter of atonement and fills the token with assurance.

One other thought, and a sweet one, this token was that of *blood which was shed*—not to be shed, but shed already. They had killed the lamb, they had taken the warm blood in the basin and smeared the doorposts, it was *all done* and all over. You and I also are resting in a finished sacrifice, not in a sacrifice to be offered, nor in a sacrifice which continues to be offered, according to this Anglican Popery which reeks in so many parish churches, but a complete sacrifice, for "by one offering He has perfected forever them that are set apart." There is no continuance of the offering of Christ in the sacrifice of the "mass"—it is a barefaced lie before Almighty God, for Christ declares that when He had once offered Himself, He forever sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. By that word, "It is finished," He has put an end to all sacrifices and offerings by way of expiation for sin, because they are not wanted—one death has accomplished it all. Beloved, what joy is here! Suffering, suffering to the death, the suffering of the Son of God, a suffering ordained of God to be the vicarious sacrifice and a suffering which is perfect and complete! Let us look at the token and let our hearts be glad within us from now on and forever. One of our kings once gave a ring to his favorite, and said to him, "I know that at the council tomorrow a charge of heresy will be brought against you. But when you come in, answer them if you will, but you need be in no fear—if you find yourself brought to a strait, simply show them the ring and they will go no further." It is even so with us. The Lord has given us the precious blood of Christ to be like a ruby ring upon our finger and now we know how far conscience may go, and how far accusations from Satan may go—we have only to produce that token and bar all further proceedings. "He that believes in Him is not condemned," neither can he be. God cannot and will not go back from His promise. The blood is the faithful assurance of the security of all the saints.

III. But now, thirdly, this is A MOST SIGNIFICANT TOKEN. Tokens generally mean something. Some inner sense is implied in them. Now, our token of the blood means four things. When the Jew smeared the blood upon the lintel and the two side posts, he meant redemption. He did as good as say, "We are redeemed by blood. The people who live in this house are free. They have been slaves but they are redeemed. They are going out tomorrow morning and old Pharaoh and all his army cannot hold them." That is just what the blood of Jesus Christ means to us. We are bought and paid for and we are a free people. And if the Son has made us free, we are free indeed. "O Lord, I am Your servant. I am Your servant. You have loosed my bonds. You have brought me up out of the house of bondage and out of the iron furnace. You have broken all my chains—the sprinkled blood declares it."

Then the blood meant, next, that the people who lived beneath that sign *belonged to God*. It was the mark of the Lord's property—"You are not your own, you are bought with a price." He who redeemed us ought to possess us. The blood, when it bought us, also set us apart to be forever the property of the Redeemer. Whenever you think of Jesus cruci-

fied, think of yourself also as crucified to the world, as no more belonging to self or sin or Satan—no longer bound by worldly customs, fashions, maxims, laws—but under law to Christ, for you are the Lord's freeman. Give up the members of your body to His service. Yield them as servants unto righteousness, because you have not been purchased—spirit, soul, and body—with corruptible things as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot. The token set forth our redemption and also God's property in us.

This token next means *acceptance*. He who has the blood of Christ sprinkled on him has that to show which renders him acceptable before the Lord. There has been a war and a wounded soldier comes home. He goes to the house of a father and mother who have a son out in the army, and he inquires, "Does so-and-so live here?" "Yes." "Can I see him?" "Yes." "I have a letter from your son, whom I left in the army, he was my dear comrade." "Are you sure you have such a letter?" The man looks disreputable, his garments are torn, and he is evidently very poor, but he replies, "Yes, I have a letter from your son." He puts his hands into his pockets, and he cannot find it. The master of the house is angry and says "It is of no use your coming here with this tale, you are deceiving me." He fumbles still in his pockets and at last he brings it out. Yes, there is the token. The father knows the handwriting of his dear boy. The letter says, "Father, this is a choice companion of mine and I want you, when he reaches home, to treat him kindly for my sake. Tell mother that anything she does for him shall be the same as if she had done it to her own boy." See how well he is received at sight of that token. And even so, when we present the blood-mark, we say to the Lord, "There is the token that we are Jesus' friends," and the Lord does not look at the rags in which our poor nature is arrayed, but He looks at the token of His own Son's blood and accepts us for His sake. What surer and more suggestive token could we desire? When cleansed in the blood of Jesus, we are comely with His comeliness and dear to the heart of God for His Son's sake.

Yes, beloved, and it moreover means *perfect* safety. As soon as ever the blood was on the lintel those inside the house were perfectly secure. The angel could not strike them, for if he had done so he would have struck his Master and insulted the Lord of angels. To use his sword while the divine shield was exhibited outside the door would have been to bid defiance to God's honor, and that no angel of God could ever do. Oh, brethren, there is no shield for a guilty soul like the blood-red shield of the atonement. Stand beneath the purple canopy of sacrifice and the great hailstones of wrath can never fall upon you. You must be safe if Christ's atonement interposes between you and God. So you see, the sprinkled blood is a very significant token. As I went, a few days ago, through a piece of forest much overgrown with undergrowth and saplings, I noticed certain straight young trees distinguished by a red mark, and I discovered that the woodmen were about to cut down all the undergrowth and clear the ground for the better growth of the timber. Those marked trees were to be spared to become large oaks. I can see the red marks and the

small trees in my mind's eye at this moment—and there come the woodmen chopping down everything with their axes and billhooks. Down goes all the brushwood and many a pole falls too, but they stop at the marked trees—these must not be touched—the red mark saves them. So is it with you and with me, if we have known the sprinkling of the blood. The Lord will not only say, "Let them alone this year also," but He will say to the destroyers, "Come not near unto those upon whom is the mark." By this token you may know that you shall live and not die. Like Rahab, we hang this scarlet line in our window, and when all Jericho goes down with terrible destruction, our house must stand for the red line secures it evermore.

IV. The fourth point is that THE BLOOD IS A LOVE-TOKEN. The blood is a token of *ancient love*, for it was shed more than 1800 years ago. Oh my soul, the Lord has given you an ancient token which sets forth His great love with which He loved you, even when you were dead in trespasses and sins. Before you were born, the blood was poured forth which is today the ensign and pledge of everlasting love.

It is a token of *intense love*, for it is a pledge taken from the heart of Christ and it denotes not the love of the lips, not love which begins and ends with outward deeds of mercy, but a love which wells up from the essence of the Redeemer's being—from His inmost heart which was reached by the cruel spear. What a token is this, a token taken not from the lilies of my Lord's garden, nor from the jewels of His crown, nor even from the hair of His head, but drawn from the inner sanctuary of His soul—from that Holy of Holies—the heart of Emanuel, God With Us. Oh believer, since you have such a token as this, you should be ready to die sooner than doubt the love of the Lord.

It is a token, too, of *mighty love*, for it testifies that He who gave it possessed a conquering flame of love which many waters could not quench nor death itself destroy. See, He gives you the blood which is the token of death, His death for you, and thus shows that He went to the grave for your sake, "and death by dying slew". Wear this token near your heart, I pray you, for it is the richest that was ever given by the hands of love to the choicest object of affection. O You who are our Well-Beloved, You have loved us even to the end, for You have loved us to the death.

It is a token, too, of a wise all-seeing love; for it shows that our Lord knows our sin and has known it all. When He gives us the blood, He does as much as declare, "My child, I am aware of the evil which is in you, for I have suffered its penalty. I know your sin, but you shall know it no more, for I have carried it away and cast it into the depths of the sea." By this token, believers know that their sin is covered, and that in the sight of the Lord, they are "all fair," for He has cleansed them from every stain. The day is come when if their sins were searched for, they would not be found. No, they shall not so much as exist, for the blood has washed them white.

And it is the token of *a love unlimited* which will deny nothing to its object. "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?" If you have received the blood of His dear Son, what will the Lord refuse you? Do you think your God will deny you providential mercies when He has already given the bleeding heart of Jesus to redeem you? Do you imagine that He will leave you without bread and water, or garments to cover your backs when He has yielded up the jewel of His soul, the delight of His heart to you? Prize the token of His love, and look at it till your soul weeps for very joy. Blessed is that man to whom the Lord has said, "The blood shall be to you for a token."

V. Lastly, it is A RECOGNITION TOKEN. The man who has this token is known to *the angels* as one of the heirs of salvation to whom they minister. As soon as they see the blood applied to the soul by faith, there is joy among them, for this is a sure sign of repentance. All God's children have this family mark at their birth and there is no mistaking it, so that at the sight of it, the angelic guardians commence their tender care and begin to bear up the newly begotten one in their hands lest at any time he dash his foot against a stone. *The devil* also knows that mark and as soon as he sees it, he begins to assail the man who bears it, seeking in all sorts of ways to destroy him. If the believer is not destroyed, it will not be for lack of enmity or industry on Satan's part. He knows the mark of the "seed of the woman," and he roars and rages, but at the same time he trembles, for well he knows that he cannot prevail. At the sight of the sacrificial token, the great enemy stands confounded—like a raging lion, he would gladly devour the sheep of the Lord, but the mark of the blood upon them saves them from his teeth.

And brethren, this blood-mark is known among *the saints,* themselves, and has a wonderful power for creating and fostering mutual love. I have often noticed that as soon as we begin to discourse upon the atoning death of our divine Lord, we are at home with one another. There may be brethren present from various churches and they may not be well at ease when we handle other subjects, but when we come to the precious blood, we come to the heart of the matter and are all as one. This is one of the secret signs of our spiritual freemasonry. I have had my heart warmed and cheered against my own will sometimes by devout writers whose doctrinal theories I do not believe, and whose churches I could not join, and yet when they write about my Lord, they win my heart. "*Aliquid Christi*," as one old divine used to say—the *something of Christ* in them awakens our affections and draws us near. Even books which are corrupt with sacramentarianism have occasionally such a sweet savor of Christ in them that we cannot utterly cast them away. Sometimes we feel bound to very carefully pare the apple and cut out the rotten places and remove the objectionable core for the sake of the sweet morsels flavored with the love of Christ. As the sweet honey-bearing flowers attract the bees, so does the name of Jesus draw all His saints to Him, and so to each other. Give me your hand, my brother, for if you know my Lord, we belong to the same family—the infallible mark of the redeemed is upon us both.

Best of all, *the Lord* knows this token. When we go to the Mercy Seat, if we would prosper we must produce the sacred passport of the precious blood. With this it is impossible to fail. The Primitive Methodist brother, when he was in a meeting where a friend could not pray, cried out, "Plead the blood, brother!" and the advice was wise. Yes, plead that and say, "For Jesus' sake—by His agony and bloody sweat—by His cross and passion." What mighty blows are given to the gate of heaven by that battering ram. These are arguments to which heaven always yields.

Our God recognizes the blood-mark in the hour of death and attends His people through the solemn article. Death's terrors are gone to him who has the blood for a token. Lay me down on my bed! There let me endure the allotted pain and weakness till the clammy sweat stands on my brow and needs to be constantly wiped away. Lay me down, I say, and I will calmly fall asleep like a child tired with a day's play, if I have but the token. Distresses and poverty and anguish of body may molest me, yet shall I be perfectly at ease and ask for no exchange. Why is this, you ask? Many a man possessed of health and wealth is not one-half so blessed as the poor saint upon his death pallet. From where does this blessedness come? Here is the secret. The Lord has passed by and given a token. "A token," you say, "what is it? Is it some line extracted from the golden book of God's election? Is it a gem taken from the diadem which is prepared for him in heaven?" No, no, it is not this. "Has he, in his sleep, beheld a vision and seen the shining ones walking the golden streets, or has he heard an audible celestial voice saying to him, 'You are mine'?" No, he has none of these. He has neither dream nor vision nor anything that men call superhuman. He is resting in the precious blood—and this blood is the token of friendship between God and his soul. By this, he knows the love of God and by this, God communes with him. They meet at the blood. God delights in the sacrifice of Christ and the believing soul delights in it, too. They have, thus, a common love and a common joy—and this has bound the two together by a bond which never can be broken. This is it which makes some of us sing—

"And when I'm to die,
Receive me, I'll cry,
For Jesus has loved me,
I cannot tell why.
But this thing I find,
We two are so joined,
He won't be in heaven
And leave me behind."

Oh what a blessing to feel that the blood of Jesus has united us to Him eternally.

Suffer this last word. Some of you, perhaps, have said, "Oh, I wish I had the blood of Jesus Christ for a token." Then let me tell you, first, that you have not to provide a sacrifice, for that is done. The Lamb is slain; the blood of the everlasting covenant is ever before the presence of God. What have you to do? You have nothing to do but to have the blood sprinkled upon you. You know how they sprinkled it—it was with a

bunch of hyssop. Hyssop is a common herb to be found everywhere in and around eastern cities, growing even on walls where but little soil is found. It was a plant with a great many stalks, so that it would hold the blood and act as a sort of brush. Indeed, its only excellence was its power to hold the blood. Now, faith is a very simple thing, and it is the act not of refined and educated minds only, but of the poorest and simplest. The efficacy of the hyssop did not lie in what the hyssop was, but in its being put into the basin to drink up the blood. My poor faith is just as common as a bit of hyssop pulled up from the wall, but then I lay it to soak in the atonement, while I muse upon who Jesus was, and what He suffered, and for what purpose, till it is wet, saturated, and all crimsoned with the vital blood. The hyssop was an insignificant item in the whole business, it is only mentioned once, the second time the sprinkling is commanded, it is not mentioned at all. And so, after all, faith is but the humble instrument of salvation—the blood is the main matter—it is the life, the shelter, the token, the everything. Let your trembling faith lay to soak in the precious blood and then say, "I believe You, Jesus, and I tell the world I believe You. Sinner as I am, Your precious blood was shed for me and I trust in You alone." Thus you crimson the lintel and the door posts. Let all men know that whatever you may have been, and whatever you are now, you do now believe in the substitutionary death of Jesus, oppose who you may. Witness, you men and angels and devils, that Jesus' blood is our sole hope. He who thus believes is saved. Brother, go your way, and leap for joy. No man ever perished who from his heart rested in the atoning blood. God bless you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Exodus 12:1-15; 21-30.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—152, 280, 404.

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THE FIRST DAY OF CREATION
NO. 1252

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, AUGUST 29, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And God saw the light that it was good."
Genesis 1:4.

WE shall, this morning, leave all discussion as to the creation of the world to those learned divines who have paid their special attention to that subject, and to those geologists who know, or at any rate think they know, a very great deal about it. It is a very interesting subject, but this is not the time for its consideration. Our business is moral and spiritual rather than scientific.

We justify our present discourse by quoting that remarkable parallel text which the Holy Spirit has given us in the second Epistle to the Corinthians, fourth chapter and the sixth verse, where Paul says, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The creation was an instructive type of the new creation. God's methods of forming the old creation illustrate His ways in preparing and perfecting His people who are new creatures in Christ Jesus. So we shall gather light from an analogy which is evidently warranted by the New Testament. We trust we shall not be guilty of inventing things fanciful, strained, or merely curious—our objective is edification and consolation—and not a display of ingenuity. May the eternal light of the Holy Spirit shine upon us now, that by His light we may see light.

Man's fallen nature is a very chaos, "without form and void," with darkness thick and sevenfold covering all. The Lord begins His work upon man by the visitation of the Spirit, who enters the soul mysteriously and broods over it, even as of old He moved upon the face of the waters. He is the quickener of the dead soul. In connection with the presence of the Holy Spirit, *the Lord sends into the soul, as His first blessing, light*. The Lord appeals to man's understanding and enlightens it by the Gospel. The heavenly light reveals to man his obligations to God and his forgetfulness of them. It shows him the evil of sin, his own guilt, consequent danger, and the impossibility of his escaping from that danger by any efforts of his own. That same light, also, reveals to man God's way of salvation—shows him the person of Christ, His work, its suitability and its freeness—and lets him see how he may obtain an interest in redemption by the simple act of believing. It is a blessed thing for any man when the Lord God says concerning him, "Let there be light." If you keep your eyes upon the chapter, you will observe that *the light came into the world at first by the word*—"God said, 'let there be light.'" It is through the Word of God contained in this book, the Bible, that light comes into the soul. Let

me correct myself—it is by Him who is called the *Logos*, THE WORD, that light is poured into the heart of man, for "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." This is that true light which lights every man that comes into the world. The Spirit, you see, is engaged in the new creation—He broods over the soul. The Son of God is the Creator, also—He is that WORD without whom nothing was made, and by whom light came. And the Father unites in the same sacred work, for it is He who speaks and it is done. It needs the Trinity to new-create a soul. Oh, Triune God, our souls which are new-created worship You with the trinity of their nature—spirit, soul, and body.

The light which broke in upon the primeval darkness was of a very mysterious kind, and came not according to ordinary laws, for as yet neither sun nor moon had been set as lights in the firmament. Can we tell how spiritual light first dawns on nature's night? It darts upon some souls without the aid of apparent ministries, immediately from God. Indeed, though the Lord sends light by this means or by that, yet in every case the light is His own work, and the means are, in themselves, so evidently powerless that the whole glory of the work belongs to the Lord alone. How He removes darkness from the understanding and illuminates the intellect is a secret reserved for Himself alone. Mysteriously, then, the light enters into the soul of man. But one thing is clear concerning it—however it comes, if it be true light, it is always God-given and comes alone from the great Father of lights. No gracious light ever will or can come to any man except directly from God Himself. There was no latent light in the chaotic mass of world. There was no brilliance to be developed out of the primitive darkness. It was needful that Jehovah should interpose and that His decree should pour in light from above. O heart of man, you are darkness itself, but in the Lord is your light found!

The light came instantaneously. Six days were occupied in furnishing the earth, but a moment sufficed for illuminating it. God works rapidly in the operation of regeneration—as with a flash, He darts light and life into the soul. The operations of grace are gradual, but its entrance is instantaneous. Although instantaneous, it is not, however, shallow and short-lived. The light did not depart because of its rapid coming—it was a permanent blessing which earth received in that glad hour. *The light remained*, increased, and though in every spot upon the globe there are necessary interludes of night, and though there has been an evening as well as a morning to all succeeding days, yet our globe has never been forsaken of the blessed light since the day when first the eternal Word flashed it forth upon the face of the deep. Even so, when God sends grace into the soul of man it comes in an instant, but it does not so depart. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." The darkness struggles for the mastery, but the light, once given, none shall quench—it must and shall shine forth more and more unto the perfect day.

All this is worthy of our careful note, but the point which we are about to dwell upon is this—our text concerns only the first day of creation and the Lord's consideration of that first day's work—and His approval of it. The first day of creation fairly pictures the commencement of our spiritu-

al life, our conviction, conversion, and first faith in Jesus. My objective shall be to speak words of comfort to beginners that I may cheer those upon whom the true light has only lately begun to shine. And I shall also give a few words of advice to older people as to their duty to these newly-enlightened ones.

I. Our first observation will be this—THE LORD SEES WHATEVER HE CREATES. "*The Lord saw the light.*" *He was the sole observer of it.* Neither eyes of man, nor bird, nor beast was there to behold the golden glory, but God saw the light. Newly enlightened one, it may be you are pained because you have no Christian companion to observe your change of heart. Cease from your sorrow, for God beholds you. Have you seen yourself a sinner and do you, therefore, weep in secret places? Have you begun to see the Savior and do you look to Him in loneliness of spirit and find in Him a joy with which a stranger intermeddled not? It is but a small matter that no human eyes have seen your repentance and your faith, for He beholds them, even He who gave them birth. It may be that neither father nor mother has perceived the change and perhaps, had they perceived it, they may be such that they would not have rejoiced in it. But let this be your comfort—your heavenly Father sees you and His heart pities you. When the prodigal was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and even thus, your heavenly Father sees you. And as this was enough for the prodigal, so it is enough for you. Upon your tears of penitence He has fixed His eyes, and upon your glance of faith He has turned His gaze. "The Lord saw the light"—this grand truth should be very sweet to those whose faith is lonely, who meet with many discouragements, and little or no sympathy. Like Hagar in the desert you should rejoicingly say, "You, God, see me." "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry." David said, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me." Oh, young beginner, the Lord sees the work of grace that is in you. Though it is but in its first day, He does not turn His eyes from the light which He has kindled. And as long as this is the case, you need not fear. The orator of old thought Plato, alone, quite enough for an audience. Much more, then, may you consider that the Lord, alone, is all that you need by way of observation and you may joyfully pray with the psalmist, "Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You use to do unto those that love Your name."

That light had come into the world in a noiseless manner, yet the Lord saw it. The entrance of God's Word which gives light is effected in "solemn silence of the mind." If men make an illumination, we can hear the crackling of their fireworks all over the city. But when God illuminates the earth with the sun, the orb of day arises without a sound. The ancients talked of the chariot of the sun, but whoever heard the sound of wheels or the hoof beats of horses in the sky? The health-bearing wings of the morning cause no tumult in the air when they are spread abroad. "When morn her rosy steps in the eastern clime advancing, sows the earth with orient pearl," her footsteps are not heard. True, the birds salute her coming with glad songs, but she herself steals onward without voice. Even thus grace enters the soul and not a whisper is breathed, yet

the Lord sees the light. Light is its own advertisement, it needs no trumpet to announce it. And it is the same with divine grace. Dear young friend, in you the work of grace has been a very quiet one. Perhaps you remember no remarkable sermon, no horrible dream, no sick-bed experience, no grim terrors of the law, as have happened to others of God's people. You have been treated as Lydia was whose heart the Lord opened, or like Timothy, you have known the Scriptures from your youth. Be not, therefore, led to suspect your sincerity, or to doubt the reality of the work of grace. Although the work in your soul has been so quiet, so hidden from the eyes of men, so unremarkable and commonplace, yet take comfort from our text, "The Lord saw the light." No trumpet proclaimed it, but the Lord saw it. No voice went forth concerning it, but the Lord saw it and it was enough. And in your case it is the same.

The earth itself could not recognize the light, yet the Lord saw it. Poor dull chaos, what could it know? And as for primeval night, the light shone in the darkness and the darkness comprehended it not. How often does the young believer stand in doubt as to himself! How frequently does he inquire, "Is this light or is it not?" Nor is he alone in such great searchings of heart, for there are times with some of the more advanced of us, when we are very glad to think that the Lord sees the light, for *we* cannot see it. There are times when, through doubt, fear, and a keen sense of sin, we begin to question whether the Lord has ever shone upon us at all! And if this happens to full-grown saints, it is not much wonder if it occurs to babes in grace in the first morning of their life. If it should occasionally prove a very serious question—"Am I in the light or not?"—we need not marvel, for often have sincere children of God put up the anxious inquiry, "Is this light or only darkness visible?" How often do we mourn that we have scarcely more light than suffices to reveal our darkness and make us pine for more. Oh, troubled one, lay this home to your soul—the Lord saw the light when earth herself could not perceive it.

Let us not forget that *besides the light there was no other beauty.* The earth, according to the Hebrew, was "*tohu* and *bohu*," which, in order to come near to both the sense and sound at the same time, I will render, "anyhow and nohow." It was confusion, emptiness, waste. Matter was discordant and disorganized. And so God fixed His eyes on the light, not on the chaos. Even so, beloved friend, your experience may seem to be a chaos, nohow and anyhow, exactly what it should not be, a maze of unformed conceptions and half-formed desires, and ill-formed prayers—but yet there is grace in you and God sees it—even amid the dire confusion and huge uproar of your spirit. What He has Himself created in you He beholds, considers, and delights in. And, as for the sin that dwells in you, He only regards it as covered from His sight by the atoning work of His dear Son.

Remember, too, that *when the light came it had to contend with darkness*, but God saw it, none the less. So also, in your soul, there still remains the darkness of inbred corruption, ignorance, infirmity, and tendency to sin. And these cause a conflict, but the light is not hidden from the eyes of God. What a mercy this is that our God keeps His eyes on the

light rather than on the darkness. Oh, how I bless Him for that! If He were to ignore the light that is in us because it is feeble, and look only at our sin because it is abundant, He would certainly utterly destroy us. But instead of that He casts our sins behind His back, while upon the new-born grace He fixes His steady gaze and says, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

For many reasons the Lord sees the light, but chiefly *He sees it because He made it*, and He forsakes not the work of His own hands. God can see grace in men where you and I cannot, because He knows where it is, seeing He Himself hid it in the soul. There is never a grain of grace in the world but what God has a register of it. All the grace in men's hearts calls God, "Father," and God hears its voice and turns His eye that way. He knows His own children and His eyes and His heart are towards them continually for good. He knows the light which is of His own creating—there is not one stray sunbeam in the universe, nor one forgotten ray of light. Neither is there a spark of forgotten grace, or a grain of salvation which has got out of its course. God cannot but remember His own grace, seeing that the giving of it is a work so dear to His heart, and the effect of that work is so precious in His esteem.

To sum up what we have said, you who have been converted to God may lament that in your soul there is no order and that everything is tossed about. You may perceive no growth, no fruit, no virtue in your life because you have not known the Lord long enough to produce much. But if there is light enough to reveal Christ in you as your only hope, be you of good cheer, for the Lord does not look for the fourth day's work on the first day. He sees that in you which is of His own giving and creating; and He calls it good. Seeing the light in you, He will perpetuate it so that you shall never walk in darkness. And He will increase it till the glory breaks upon you. Do you repent of sin? God sees the light. Have you bemoaned your shortcomings? God saw the light. Have you begun to pray? "Behold, he prays," says God, for He sees the light. Have you believed in Jesus Christ with even a trembling faith? God sees the light. Have you begun to hope in His mercy? He sees that hope, for the God that gave you its light still looks upon it.

II. It is time for us to pass on to a second head, which is this—THE LORD APPROVES OF WHAT HE CREATES. "God saw the light *that it was good*." He took pleasure in it. Now, as far as this world was concerned, light was but *young and new*—and so in some of you, grace is quite a novelty. You were only converted a very little while ago and you have had no time to try yourselves or to develop your divine graces, yet the Lord delights in your new-born life. There are some older folk who are suspicious of the dawn of grace and look very dubiously upon new converts, but in this they have not the mind of God. The old members of our churches in the country, 20 years ago, used to say, "We must not take in young converts too soon. We must summer and winter them before they are baptized." This they called prudence. I wonder what they would think of prudent farmers who summered and wintered the lambs before they took them into the fold? Or prudent parents who summered and win-

tered their babes before they pressed them to their bosom? We ought to right gladly to take the little babes in grace and nurse them for the Lord—and by no means despise their youth. The Lord did not leave the light to itself till it had been tried for years, but on the first day He smiled upon it and pronounced it good. He took delight in it because it was as much His creation and as truly good as if He had made it ages before. Light is good at dawn as well as at noon. The grace of God is good though but newly received. It will work out for you greater things, by-and-by, and make you happier and more holy, but even now all the elements of excellence are in it and its first day has the divine blessing upon it. Grace in the bud is pleasant unto the Lord—let this truth fill the newly converted with intense delight.

Here we must mention again that it was *struggling light*, yet none the less for that approved of by Lord. We do not understand how it was that the light and the darkness were together until God divided them, as this verse intimates, but as John Bunyan says, "No doubt darkness and light here began their quarrel," for what communion has light with darkness? The black darkness was in possession, but the arrows of light pierced it through and through. It strove to hold its own, but before long it could be said, "The darkness is past and the true light now shines." Do you remember how it was with you when the light invaded the little world within you? I remember well the inward battle and sore conflict in my own case. What struggles! What contentions! What conflicts my soul endured when the light first broke in upon nature's night! My darkened heart rebelled against the light, hating to have its deeds reproved. But the light would not be extinguished or turned aside. Backed by the divine command, it pierced its way until I joined the company to whom it is said, "You were sometime darkness, but now are you light in the Lord." My brethren, I am sure you are no strangers to this conflict, nor is it to you altogether a thing of the past. You are still in the conflict. Still grace and sin are warring in you, and will do so till you are taken home. Let this help you, O you who are perplexed. Remember that struggling as the light is, God approves of it and calls it good. Even the repentance which cannot repent as it would is good. The faith which cannot believe as it would is good. Life which smolders like fire in damp wood is good, and the Lord so esteems it. "A bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax He will not quench."

As yet the light had not been divided from the darkness and the boundaries of day and night were not fixed. And it is so in young beginners—they hardly know which is grace and which is nature, what is of themselves and what is of Christ—and they make a great many mistakes. Yet the Lord makes no mistake of that which His grace has placed in them. They have so little discernment that they see and do not see, for they see men as trees walking, but God sees *them* clearly enough. It is neither day nor night with them—they are in a fog and lack power of discernment—but the Lord discerns them, for He knows them that are His. Let this be their joy that the Lord can analyze their condition and He knows what is light in them and approves it.

As yet the light and darkness had not been named—it was afterwards that the Lord called the light, "day" and the darkness "night." Yet He saw the light that it was good. And so, though you do not know the names of things, God knows your name. Though you do not understand the doctrines so as to speak of them correctly, yet He understands you. Your ignorance of terms and names, your confusion of mind and childish misapprehensions will not provoke the Lord or make Him overlook the grace which He has worked in you. The sooner you can distinguish between things that differ, the better, but meanwhile the Lord distinguishes what is in you and loves the light which He has given you, for He never made a grace which He did not love, and never worked a work in the soul of man which He did not approve.

The light of the first day could not reveal much of beauty, for there was none, and so, dear friend, *the light* within does not yet reveal much to you—and what it does reveal is uncomely, but the light itself is good—whatever it may make manifest. If the grace given you, my young friend, only reveals the depravity of your nature, if it only shows you the cage of unclean birds within you and the wild beasts that rage and rave within your nature, if it only makes these growl in their dens more fiercely than ever because their reign is coming to an end—still it is light. If it displays your nature as tossed about in sorry tumult and wretched disorder, yet the light is good, and God takes delight in it. When no varied landscape of land and sea, mountain and lake, meadow and forest charmed the eyes, yet the Lord approved the light which shone over the formless mass. Let this cheer and comfort you that in the same manner you have the approbation of God upon whatever of grace His hand has created within you.

But why did God say that light was good? I suppose it was because *its creation displayed His attributes*. The instantaneous coming of light revealed His power, His sovereignty, His goodness, His wisdom, and His love. He is not a God whose glory consists in darkness, but "He covers Himself with light as with a garment." Grace is a still more glorious manifestation of the divine character and in it God glorifies His name. The grace that is in you has sufficed to show you the power and the justice of God—and something of His mercy and His love—and angels from heaven have beheld the same sacred attributes in the divine work within you. Therefore God loves grace because it makes Him known in many of His glorious attributes.

He loves the light, too, because *it is like Himself*, for "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." Light is ethereal and almost spiritual, and therein like He who is a Spirit. Light makes manifest the truth and therein is like the God of Truth. The grace that is in you, if indeed it is grace, is yet more truly of the nature of God, for it is that living and incorruptible seed by which you are made partakers of the divine nature and are enabled to escape the corruption which is in the world through lust. Satan is the prince of the powers of darkness, but another principle even that of the light of God dwells in the man who believes in Jesus—and this principle must be good—for it is of God.

Light is eminently good, for *the Lord spent a whole day in creating and arranging it*—a whole day out of six. This shows that He attaches great importance to it. Moreover, He gave it the front rank by occupying the first day of creation's week upon it. Even thus the plan of grace was early in the mind of God. It was and is His masterpiece and He has never yet placed it in the background. His eternal wisdom devised it from old and that same wisdom continues to dwell upon it all through this long day of grace. The little grace which is in you is approved of God, for it is the fruit of His thoughts of old, and by it He has begun His new creation in you.

I suppose that the Lord approved of the light because it was *a seasonable* thing. It was what was needed to begin with. Not but what God could work in the dark, for as to natural light in that respect darkness and light are both alike to Him. We can all see that the works of His creating skill needed light, for how could plants, animals, and men live without it? Assuredly the sanctifying operations of the Spirit of God require light in the soul—the understanding must be enlightened, for true religion cannot flourish in ignorance—and until there is some knowledge of God, none of the graces can blossom. When God the Holy Spirit new-creates a man, the first essential thing towards it is the illumination of his soul in knowledge and holiness, to know the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Because it is so essential, the Lord pronounces it good.

So then, dear brethren, I have shown you that God took delight in His own work, and I have given you some reasons why He did so.

Now, you trembling beginners, I want you to feel that if God approves of the grace which He has worked in you, He will preserve it. He will not suffer the light which He kindles to be quenched by the world, the flesh, or the devil. Yes, He will improve it and cause your twilight to brighten into perfect day. I would to God that some poor, troubled one could catch this thought, for I remember well the time when it would have been exceedingly consoling to myself. When I compared myself with older saints, I feared that there was little of the divine work in me. But if I had known, as now I rejoice to know, that God's work, even at the beginning, is approved by Him—that even the rudiments and elements of grace in the soul are looked upon by Him with divine satisfaction, I think my heart would have greatly rejoiced. I want you lambs of the flock to feed on this tender grass. It is sweet food, suitable to your young days. Fear not, little flock. Your great Shepherd takes delight in you.

III. But now, thirdly, let me give you what will seem to be, but is not, the same thought—THE LORD QUICKLY DISCERNS ALL THE GOODNESS AND BEAUTY WHICH EXISTS IN WHAT HE CREATES. The Lord did not merely feel approbation for the light, but He perceived reason for it—He *saw* that it was good. He could see goodness in it where, perhaps, no one else would have been able to do so.

Let us note, then, that *light is good in itself* and so is divine grace. What a wonderful thing light is! Just think of it! How simple it is and yet how complex. Scarcely have the students of light been able as yet to discover a tithe of its various qualities. Wonders have burst upon them, but

there are many more to follow. What intertwisted colors go to make up the simplicity of the white light in which we rejoice? Grace, too, is simple yet complex. The grace that quickens, the grace that convicts of sin, the grace that consoles, the grace that instructs, the grace that sustains, the grace that sanctifies, the grace that perfects—it is all a very simple matter, but how varied are its operations! How marvelous is the "all grace" which God makes to abound unto us. Think of the triple ray which we find in grace—the grace of the Father in election, the grace of the Son in redemption, the grace of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Consider, admire, and adore the manifold grace of God.

Light, too, how common it is! We see it everywhere, and all the year round. The most despotic monarch cannot enclose the light for himself. The meanest beggar takes a royal share. It cannot be monopolized, but pays its gladsome visits to all alike. Even thus the Scriptures reveal the freeness of divine grace—and experience shows that it shines on the poorest and the simplest—it enlightens the foolish and the ignorant. Yet what a precious thing is light. Those who are blind, what would they not give to see it! And if you and I were confined in a sepulcher, how earnestly should we long, once more, to walk in the light of heaven. So is the grace of God priceless yet free to every eye that is able to drink it in.

Light, too, how feeble and yet how strong! Its beams would not detain us one-half so forcibly as a cobweb, yet how mighty it is, and how supreme! Scarcely is there a force in the universe of God which is more potent. The grace of God, in the same manner, is contemptible in the eyes of man, and yet the majesty of omnipotence is in it, and it is more than conqueror. Light, too, as we have said before, how noiseless! You never hear its footsteps, and yet how effectual. So the grace of God comes not with observation, but its transformations are unparalleled. Light, too, how varied, as we see it in many phases and through differing mediums, and yet how uniform! How uniformly good! Grace comes in many ways and works variously, yet it is always the same, and its results are always pure, lovely, and of good repute. Well did God say that light was good, for who can make it otherwise? Who can defile it? The sunbeam lights on a dunghill, but its purity remains snow-white as the lily. Who can rob light of its beauty? Its excellence remains undimmed, though it pierces the gloom of a dark dungeon, feverish and full of loathsome filth. Light never ferments into darkness, nor decays into gloom. The leaves upon the trees have, in successive autumn blasts turned dry, and have fallen to the earth to rot, but no ray of light has ever withered. Many changes the world has passed through, but light is the same, the glory of its youth is on it. The young sunbeams leap from the central fire and visit us on wings unwearied, they themselves being adorned with all the freshness of earth's birthday. Transfer all this to the grace of God and it will bear to be emphasized. Grace cannot be depraved; it is always pure and good. It cannot be overcome; it will effect its purposes. It never corrupts, it is the seed of God which lives and abides forever. Oh, precious grace, if you are in the soul—if, as yet, it is but your first day—you are good.

Light is good, not only in itself, but *in its warfare*. The light contended with darkness and it was good for darkness to be battled with. Grace has come unto you, young friend, and it will fight with your sin—and it ought to be fought with—and to be overcome.

The light which came from God was *good in its measure*. There was neither too much of it nor too little. If the Lord had sent a little more light into the world, we might all have been dazzled into blindness, and if He had sent less, we might have groped in gloom. God sends into the new-born Christian just as much grace as he can bear—He does not give him the maturity of later years, for it would be out of place. Did not Jesus say, "I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now." Dawn is good as well as noontide. A babe in grace is beautiful and the grace in him is suitable to his condition. Do not, dear brother, judge the babe because he has not the light and the grace which belong to a full-grown man, for that would be unreasonable.

Light was *good as a preparation* for God's other works. The great Creator was about to make plants. What could plants do without light? He knew that He would soon make fowl that fly in the open firmament, and beasts that graze the meadows—is not light needed by all these? He knew that light, though it was but the beginning, was necessary to the completion of His work. Light was necessary that the eyes of man might rejoice in the works of God and so God saw the light that it was good in connection with what was to be. And, oh, I charge you who have to deal with young people, look at the grace they have in them in relation to what will be in them. Think not so much of the weakness of it as of the fact that it is only the green blade. Let your faith see the golden ear which will come from that tender shoot. See the oak in the acorn, the man in the child—and call them good.

What a mass of thought one might raise from this one truth of the goodness of light and the goodness of grace, as to their *results*. Light produces the beauty which adorns the world, for without it all the world were uncomely blackness. Light's brush paints the whole and even so all beauty of character is the result of grace. Light sustains life, for life, in due time, would dwindle and die out without it, and thus grace alone sustains the virtues and blessings of the believer. Without daily grace, we should be spiritually dead. Light heals many sicknesses and grace brings healing in its wings. Light is comfort, light is joy, the prisoner in his darkness knows it to be so. And so the grace of God produces joy and peace wherever it is shed abroad. Light reveals and so does grace, for without it we could not see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. O to walk in the light as God is in the light so that we may have fellowship with Him. O Lord, "send out Your light and Your truth. Let them lead me. Let them bring me unto Your holy hill."

You see, now, that God perceived in light a mass of latent good and in the same manner, He perceives, in the first work of grace in the soul, an amount of good which the soul itself knows nothing of, and which even Christian observers, with kindly eyes, would not be able to detect.

IV. This leads me to close with a practical observation, namely, that GOD RECORDED HIS ESTIMATE OF THIS FIRST DAY'S PRODUCT. Here we have His judgement *expressed*—"God saw the light that it was good." This leads me to say to the young Christian, *the Lord would have you encouraged*. You have been looking at yourself since you have been converted and, perhaps, you have grown desponding, and have cried, "Alas, I am vile. I did not know all that was in me." No, and you do not know all that is in you now. "But I am so bad." Let me assure you, you are a great deal worse than you think you are. "Alas, sir, I see enough to drive me to despair." Yes, but if you could see the whole truth about yourself, you would be driven to self-despair ten times over. You are so bad as to be hopeless. And you had better know it, too. I often thank God for teaching me early that my old nature was dead and corrupt, so that nothing has surprised me since. I commenced as a penniless bankrupt and I have, therefore, never become poorer. I began naked, and therefore, I have never lost a rag. I was dead, utterly dead, and therefore I have lost no strength. It is a necessary thing for you to know that in your flesh there dwells no good thing. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be." Put that down at the first, as an ascertained fact, and then nothing will amaze you afterwards. Your nature is incorrigible and incurable. But there is gracious light in you which God has put there and God delights in you because of it. Though you may have been born to God but a week ago and are a poor little crying baby in the nursery of the Lord's house, yet your Father loves you and sets great store by the grace He has given you. Now, do not be downcast. Say to yourself, "The Lord has said that the faith which He has given me is good. He has said that this little love that I have for Him is good. I will be encouraged, for if He has begun a *good* work in me, He will carry it on."

My last word is to older Christian people. If the Lord says that His work in the first day is good, I want you to say so, too. Do not wait till you see the second, third, fourth, fifth, or sixth day before you feel confidence in the convert and offer him fellowship. *If God speaks encouragingly so soon, I want you to do the same*. A few words to a young Christian will be greatly helpful to him and his weakness craves them. Those of us who have been a long while in the Lord's ways ought to be ashamed if we are gruff, and sour, and critical. You know it was the elder brother, not one of the younger ones, who said, "This your son has come, who has devoured your living with harlots," and so on. Do not degenerate into the elder brother's spirit, I pray you. You must grow older in years, but endeavor to remain young at heart. There is a tendency to look for far too much in young converts and to expect in them a great deal more than we shall ever see. This is wrong. We shall not do them much good by criticizing them, but we may greatly benefit them by encouraging them. We have all read in the papers this week about Captain Webb's swimming across the channel, and we noticed that every now and then his friends *gave him a cheer*. Would that help him? No doubt it did. There is nothing like a cheer to a fellow when he feels faint and weak. Give the weak

brother a cheer, I say. When you meet with a young believer who is tossed about, give him a cheer. Give him a hearty cheer. Tell him some choice promise. Tell him how the Lord helped *you*. Your few words may not be much to you, but they will be very much to him. Whereas the black look, which, perhaps, you really did not mean, may chill him to the very marrow of his bones. Many a poor young Christian has been frost-bitten by the coldness of stern professors.

Let us make a rule to encourage the young and help them forward, for that work of encouragement may affect the whole of their future history. As the Lord said the first day was good, so He said the same right on, till at last He declared that it was "*very good*." In this way I trust it will be "good" with young converts from beginning to end. That early blessing, which you may be the means of bestowing upon the young Christian, may be the first of thousands of commendations which shall culminate in, "Well done, good and faithful servant." At any rate, if you do this, my dear brethren, it will reveal in you a God-like disposition. The Lord said that the first day's work was good. Be as God is, ready to see the good, if it is ever so little, and ready to speak well of it.

It will be for your own comfort to see and commend the young work of grace. If you have an eye to spy out what is good, either in young people or old people, it will be a very happy faculty. Those who have a keen eye for others' faults are wretched beings. They look at the sun and they say, "He has spots." Then they gaze at the moon and observe that its light is very pale. Better be blind than see in this fashion. Let it not be so among you. But as God saw the light that it was good, so do you look for it and rejoice in it. Be on the side of weak grace and your own grace will grow stronger. Comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient towards all and in holy charity think no evil, but rejoice in the truth.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis 1.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK."—104, 205, 891.

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THE LION-SLAYER—THE GIANT-KILLER
NO. 1253

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 5, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Your servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, the Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."
1 Samuel, 17:36, 37.

WE have all thought a great deal of the courage of David in meeting giant Goliath, but probably we have not given him credit for his conduct in a previous contest. We have not sufficiently noticed that immediately before the encounter with the Philistine, he fought a battle which cost him far more thought, prudence, and patience. The battle of words in which he had to engage with his brothers and with King Saul was a more trying ordeal to him than going forth in the strength of the Lord to smite the uncircumcised boaster. Many a man meets with more trouble from his friends than from his enemies. And when he has learned to overcome the depressing influence of prudent friends, he makes short work of the opposition of avowed adversaries.

Observe that David had first to contend with his own brothers. I hardly think Eliab was so much swayed by envy as has been supposed. I fancy that Eliab had too much contempt for his young brother to envy him. He thought it ridiculous that a youth so given to music and piety and gentle pursuits should dream of encountering a giant. He derided the idea of his being equal to such a task and only feared, lest in a moment of foolish enthusiasm, he might throw his life away in the mad enterprise. And therefore, Eliab somewhat superciliously, but still somewhat in the spirit natural to an elder brother who feels himself a sort of guardian to the younger members of the house, chided him and told him that only pride and curiosity had brought him there at all and that he had better have remained with his sheep in the wilderness. Such a youth, he thought, was more fit among lambs than among warriors, and more likely to be in his place beneath a tree with his shepherd's pipe than in the midst of a battle. David met this charge in the very wisest way—he answered with a few soft words, and then turned away. He did not continue to argue, for in such a contest, to multiply words is to increase ill feelings and he who is silent first is the conqueror. Grandly did this young man restrain himself, though the provocation was very severe, and herein he won the honors of the man who restrains his spirit and he is greater than the soldier who takes a city. I admire David as he selects his five smooth stones from the brook, but I admire him quite as much when he so gently replies where others might have been angry—and then so wise-

ly turns aside from a debate which could not have been to the profit of either party.

Next, he is brought before Saul and enters upon a contest with a King to whom he felt loyal respect, and with a soldier who had been a man of war from his youth up and had worked many famous deeds, one, therefore, to whom David looked up with not a little reverence. When King Saul said to him, "You are not able to fight with this Philistine, for you are but a youth and he a man of war from his youth," it must have been somewhat difficult for the young hero to cope with the weighty judgment. And yet he did so, answering meekly, forcibly, and in all respects well. Did you notice how David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him." He did not say, "Let not *your heart fail you*"—he was too much of a courtier for that; he had too much delicacy of mind to insinuate that a royal heart could fear; when he proceeded to argue with the King, it was in the most polite and deferential manner. He begins, "Your servant kept his father's sheep." He calls himself a servant of the King and does not hesitate to admit that he is only a shepherd who had no flock of his own, but served under his father. There was nothing like assumption, but the very reverse. Yet while he used soft words, he brought forth hard arguments. He mentioned facts and these are always the best weapons against carnal reasoning. Saul said, "You are not able to meet this Philistine." But David replied, "Your servant slew both the lion and the bear." He placed facts against mere opinions and won the day. He did not quote Scripture to the King, for I suppose he knew Saul too well for that, and felt that he had not grace enough to be swayed by the promises and examples of Holy Writ. But he brought facts before him, knowing well how to give a reason for the hope that was in him with meekness and fear. His arguments quite overcame the opposition of Saul, which would have dampened the enthusiasm of many. And so Saul not only commissioned him to go and fight the Philistine, saying, "Go, and the Lord be with you," but he actually clothed him in his royal armor, which was of no small value and which, of course, would have increased the honors of the Philistine champion had David fallen before him. Some little faith in David was kindled in Saul's bosom and he was willing to trust his armor in his hands. Thus it is clear that David fought the battles with Saul as admirably as he afterwards conducted his duel with the giant—and he deserves no small honor for it. No, rather unto God be honor who, while He taught His servant's hands to war and his fingers to fight, also taught his tongue to utter right words by which he put to silence those who would have abashed him.

What was the meat of David's argument? What were the five smooth stones which he threw at the head of carnal reasoning? That shall be the subject of this morning's discourse. We will consider the way in which he argued down all doubts and fears and by the Spirit of God was nerved to go forth to deeds of sacred daring in the name of the Most High, for the same conquering arguments may, perhaps, serve our turn also.

Three things are before us in the text, *recollections, reasonings* and *results*.

I. First, RECOLLECTIONS. *"Your servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and smote him, and slew him. Your servant slew both the lion and the bear."* These were noteworthy facts which David had stored up in his memory. And he now mentions them, for they exactly answered his purpose. We ought not to be unmindful of the way by which the Lord our God has led us, for if we are, we shall lose much. Some saints have very short memories. It has been well said that we write our benefits in dust and our injuries in marble. And it is equally true that we generally inscribe our afflictions upon brass, while the records of the deliverances of God are written in water. It ought not to be. If our memories were more tenacious of the merciful visitations of our God, our faith would often be strengthened in times of trial. Now, what did David remember, for I want you to remember the same.

He recollected, first, that, whatever his present trial might be, *he had been tried before*—tried when he was but a young man peacefully employed in keeping his father's flocks. A lion rushed upon his prey and he had to defend his sheep—that was no small trial for a young man—to have to meet a savage beast, strong, furious, and probably ravenous with hunger. Yet the ordeal had not destroyed him and he felt sure that another of the same kind would not do so. He had encountered that danger in the course of his duty, when he was in his proper place and engaged in his lawful calling. And he had thereby learned that the path of duty is not without its difficulties and perils. He was keeping his flock as he ought to be and yet a lion attacked him. And so you and I have met with trials which did not arise from sin, but on the other hand, came to us because we conscientiously did the right thing and would not yield to temptation. We must not think that we are out of the right road when we meet with difficulties, for we must expect through much tribulation to inherit the Kingdom of God. Severe afflictions and afflictions arising out of holy walking are not new things to us. Let us now remember our old encounters.

He remembered, too, that *he had been tried frequently*. He had not only been attacked by a lion, but also by a bear. He had been tried in different ways, for lions and bears do not fight exactly in the same manner, neither are they to be met with precisely the same tactics. David remembered that his trials had been of different sorts and that in each case the battle had been hard. It was no small matter to fight hand to hand with a lion, and no child's play to rush single-handed upon a bear. We, also, in looking back, remember sharp encounters with foes of many kinds which were terrible battles to us at the time. Brethren, some of us who have been for years in the ways of the Lord can tell of shrewd brushes with the enemy. We can speak of wounds and ugly rents of which we wear the scars to this day. Many have been our adversaries and furious—yet we have been upheld till now by Jesus, the Captain of our salvation. Why, then, should we fear concerning the present fiery trial, as though some strange thing had happened to us? Is it a Philistine this time? Well, it was a lion before, and a bear on another occasion—it is only a little

change of the same constant trial of our faith—therefore, let us not shrink from the conflict.

Next, David recollected that *he had risked all in the prosecution of his duty*. He was set to take care of the sheep and the lambs and he did so. A lion had dared to leap into the fold and seize a lamb, and without a single thought of anything but the lamb and his own duty, the young shepherd rushed upon the monster with all the ardor of youth. And smiting him with his crook compelled him to drop his prey. He had put his own life in jeopardy for the poor defenseless lamb. Can you not remember, my Christian brethren, when you also took no thought as to what you should lose if you followed Christ and cared not if it cost you your very life? With earnest honesty you desired to learn what you ought to do and you did it, regardless of the cost. You defied reproach, slander, misrepresentation and unkindness, so long as you could but clear your conscience and honor your Lord. O blessed recklessness! Do you remember those early days when you could cheerfully have gone to prison and to death for Christ's sake? For Scriptural doctrines and ordinances you would willingly have suffered martyrdom. Perhaps some of you have, on more than one occasion, actually risked everything for the sake of integrity and for the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ, even as others have defied the utmost power of Satan and the most virulent hatred of men for the sake of the Lord God of Hosts. You have felt that you could sooner die than deny the truth and sooner perish from off the face of the earth than to turn from the trust which the Lord had committed to you. Look back upon your brave days, my brethren, not that you may be proud of what you did, but that you may be ashamed if you are afraid to do the same today. Blush if what you could do as a babe in grace should appear too difficult for you in riper years. These remembrances have precious uses—they will lead us to bless God and humble ourselves in His presence.

Next David remembered that *he had on that occasion gone alone to the fray*. The antagonist was a lion. A dozen men might have found themselves too few for the fight and David remembered that in that contest he was quite alone—he had not called in other shepherds to the rescue, but armed only with his crook, he had belabored the lion till the monster found it convenient to leave his prey and turn upon the young shepherd. David was ready for him, seized him by his beard, dashed his head upon the rocks, and did not relinquish his grasp till the king of beasts lay dead at his feet. It was a grand incident, even had it stood alone, but a bear had supplied an equally memorable trophy. Some of us may well recall hours in our past lives when we were all alone and as we went forth to serve the Lord Jesus, our enterprise was regarded as Utopian and spoken of as sure to end in failure. Many a good man has gone forth for Christ's sake even worse than alone, for those who should have aided have done their best to criticize and prophesy disaster. But men whom God ordains to honor have shut their ears to critics and pushed on till they have reached success. And then everybody has said, "We always thought so," and not a few have even claimed to have been ardent admirers all along. Brother, do you remember when everyone said you were

foolhardy and self-sufficient, and regarded your course as absurd and sure to come to an end? Remember when they said six months were to see the end of your career, which was a mere bubble and would soon collapse? Ah, those were brave times when the Lord was with you and man's opinion weighed but lightly. It may be that your relatives turned their backs upon you and no man would give you a good word. And yet, in the name of the Lord God of Hosts, you did the right and dared all results. And you have had no cause to regret it, but overflowing reasons to bless God that He strengthened you to "dare to be a Daniel and dare to stand alone." Look back at that courageous hour, and now that you are surrounded by a goodly company of friends, think whether you have as simple a trust in God *now* as you manifested then. If you judge that you have, prove by your actions that you can still dare to go forward under difficulties, unshackled by dependence on an arm of flesh. The discipline of desertion ought not to have been lost upon you—you ought to be all the stronger for having been compelled to walk alone. The friendship of your fellows has been a loss rather than a gain if you cannot now wage single-handed battle as you did in former times. Have you now become slavishly dependent on an arm of flesh? If so, chide yourself by the memories of braver days.

David also recollected that on that occasion, when he smote the lion and the bear, *he had nothing visible to rely upon, but simply trusted his God*. He had in his hand no sharp weapon of iron with which to smite the wild beast to the heart. Careless as to weapons, he thought only of his God and rushed on the foe. He was as yet a young man, his muscles were not set and strong, neither did he seem fit for such a venturous deed. But his God was almighty and reliant upon the omnipotence of God, he thought nothing of his youth, but flung himself into the fray. What more in the way of help did he need, since God was with him? Oh, brethren, there were times, with some of us, when we commenced our work when our sole reliance was the unseen Lord. We were cast upon the invisible power of God and if that could fail us we must fail. Our attempts were such as carnal reason could not justify, such indeed as only divine interposition could carry through. They were right enough if the divine power could be calculated on, but apart from that, we were near insane. Glory be to God, He has been as good as His word. Our faith has been justified by results and unbelief has been struck dumb. The Lord taught us to rest in Him from our youth up and to declare His wondrous works. And now that we have tried and proved His faithfulness, we dare not hide these things from the generation following. Our witness must be borne even though we should be charged with boasting. "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." But can it be true that now we have begun to coolly calculate means and to rely upon methods and plans, whereas once we looked to God alone? Do we now trust in this friend and rely on that and distrust the Lord if friends are few? Shame upon us if we do, for this is to leave the way of victory for the path of defeat, to come down from the heroic track to the common highway of carnal reasoning, and so to fall into care, fretfulness, weakness, and dishonor! Happy is the man who trusts in the Lord alone by unstaggering faith. He shall go from

strength to strength, but he who chooses to walk by sight shall utterly decay.

David recollected also that *the tactics which he adopted on that occasion were natural, artless, and vigorous*. All that he did was just smite the lion and the bear with his staff, or whatever came first to hand, and then to fight as nature and the occasion suggested. He did what his courage prompted, without waiting to consult a committee of lion-slayers and bear-trappers. His whole art was faith. This was his science and his skill. He consulted not with flesh and blood. He followed no precedents, imitated no noted hunters, and encumbered himself with no rules. He did his best as his faith in God directed him. He threw his whole soul into the conflict and fought vigorously, for his faith did not make him sit still and expect the lion to die in a fit or the bear to become insensible. He seemed to say to himself, "Now, David, if anything is to be done, you must be all here and every muscle you have must be put to the strain. You have a lion to fight with, therefore, stir up your strength and while you rely upon God, alone, take care to play the man this day for your father's flock." Courage supplied coolness. And energy, backed up by confidence, won the day. Do you remember, my brother, when in your own way you did the same? You were reliant upon God, but not idle. You put your whole force of soul and energy into your Master's service, as if it all rested on you and yet you depended wholly on Him and you succeeded! How is it with you now? Do you now take things easily? Do you wonder that you do not succeed? If you are growing cold and careless, if you are getting sleepy and dull, rebuke your soul and use your past experience as a whip with which to flog yourself into energy. Let it never be said that he who woke himself up to fight a lion now falls asleep in the presence of a Philistine.

David remembered *that by confidence in God his energetic fighting gained the victory*—the lion was killed and the bear was killed, too. And cannot you remember, brethren, what victories God gave you? When you were little in Israel and despised, yet His hand was upon you; and when few would bid you God speed, yet the Jehovah of Hosts encouraged your heart. And when you were feeble and but a youth, the Lord Jesus helped you to do exploits for Him in your own way. Remember this, and be of good courage this morning in the conflict which now lies before you. David talked of his former deeds somewhat reluctantly. I do not know that he had ever spoken of them before. He did so on this occasion with the sole motive of glorifying God and that he might be allowed to repeat them. He wished for permission from Saul to confront the Philistine champion and bring yet greater glory to God. Brethren, whenever you talk of what God enabled you to do, mind you lay the stress upon God's enabling, and not upon your own doings. And when you rehearse the story of your early days, let it not be as a reason why you should now be exonerated from service and be allowed to retire upon your laurels, but as an argument why you should now be allowed the most arduous and dangerous post in the battle. Let the past be a stepping stone to something higher—an incentive to nobler enterprise. On, on you soldiers of the cross. In God's name eclipse your former selves. As grace enabled

you to pile the carcass of the bear upon the corpse of the lion, so now resolve that the Philistine shall increase the heap and his head shall crown the whole, to the honor and glory of the God of Israel. So much for recollections. I pity the man who has none of them and I pity, yet more, the man who, having them, is now afraid to risk all for his Lord.

II. Now for REASONINGS. David used an argument in which no flaw can be found. He said, "The case of this Philistine is a parallel one to that of the lion. If I act in the same manner, by faith in God, with this giant as I did with the lion, God is the same and therefore, the result will be the same." That seems to me to be very good reasoning and I bid you adopt it. Such-and-such was my past difficulty and my present trouble is of the same order. In that past trial, I rested upon God and acted in a right way—and He delivered me. Therefore, if I trust in God still, and do as before, He is the same as ever—and I shall triumph again.

Let us now consider the case and we shall see that it really was parallel. There was the flock, defenseless. Here is Israel, God's flock, defenseless, too, with no one to take up its cause. In all the camp, there was not one single man who dared take up the giant challenge. David was a shepherd and therefore, as a shepherd, bound to defend his flock. And in the present instance he remembered, I doubt not, that Samuel had anointed him to be King over Israel and he felt that some of the responsibility of the anointing rested upon him even then. And if no other man would play the shepherd, the anointed son of Jesse must do it; and so it looked to him like a parallel case—Israel the flock and he the shepherd who must defend it.

He was alone that day when he smote the lion and so he was this day when he was to confront his enormous foe. Of course it was one of the conditions of a duel that the Israelite champion should go forth alone, and besides that, there was no one in all the camp who was likely to wish to accompany him upon such an errand. So, now that he was all alone, the case was the more truly parallel.

As for that Philistine, he felt that in him he had an antagonist of the old sort. It was brute force before. It was brute force now. It might take the shape of a lion or a bear or a Philistine, but David considered that it was only so much flesh and bone and muscle—so much brag or roar, tooth or spear. He considered the Philistine to be only a wild animal of another shape because he was not in covenant with God, and dared to put himself in opposition to the Most High. My brethren, a man who has God for a friend is higher than an angel, but a man who is God's enemy is no better than a beast. Reckon him so and your fears of him will vanish. Goliath was mighty, but so was the lion. He was cunning, but so was the bear. The case was only a repetition of the former combat. And as God was not with the lion, nor with the bear, so David felt that God was not with Goliath and could not be, for he was the enemy of God's Israel. And as God had been with him when fighting the wild beasts, so he felt that God was with him now. It looked to him as if he had already twice gone through a rehearsal of all this when he was in the wilderness alone, and therefore he could the more easily go through it now. Perhaps there flashed in his mind the case of Samson, who learned to slay the Philis-

tines by rending a lion when he was alone in the vineyard. So David felt, "I have killed my lion like Samson and now, like Samson, I go to fight this Philistine, or a thousand like he, if need be, in the name of the Lord of hosts."

The whole argument is this—in the one case, by such tactics we have been successful, trusting in God—and therefore, in a similar case we have only to do the same and we shall realize the same victory. Brethren, here is a fault with most of us, that when we look back upon past deliverances we do not draw this parallel, but on the contrary, the temptation haunts us to think that our present trial is clearly a new case. For instance, David might have said, "When I slew that lion I was younger than I am now and I had more courage and vivacity, but those shrewd brushes have strained me somewhat and I had better be more prudent." Just as you and I say, sometimes, "Ah, what I did was done when I was a young man, I cannot do the same now. That trouble which I bore so patiently, by God's grace, was in other times. But this affliction has come upon me when I am less able to endure it, for I have not the elasticity of spirit which once I had, nor the vigor I formerly possessed." When we want to escape from some arduous work, we do it by trying to show that we are not under the same obligations as in former days. We know in our conscience that if we did great things when we were young we ought to do greater things now that we are older, wiser, more experienced, and more trained in war—but we try to argue our conscience into silence. If the Lord helped us to bear with patience, or to labor with zeal after all the experience we have had, that patience and zeal should now be easier to us than before. Alas, we do not argue so, but to our shame, we excuse ourselves and live ingloriously.

I know a man who today says, "Yes. What we did in years gone by, we did in our heroic age, but we are not so enthusiastic now." And why not? We are so apt to magnify our former selves and think of our early deeds as of something to be wondered at but not to be attempted now. Fools that we are! They were little enough in all conscience and ought to be outdone. Oh, dear brethren, this resting on our oars will not do. We are drifting down with the tide. David did not say, "I slew a lion and a bear so I have had my turn at such bouts. Let somebody else go and fight that Philistine." Yet we have heard people say, "When I was a young man I taught in the Sunday school. I used to go out preaching in the villages and so on." Oh, brother, and why not do it now? I think you ought to be doing more instead of less. As God gives you more knowledge, more experience, and more grace surely your labors for Him ought to be more abundant than they used to be, but alas, you do not look on it as a parallel case and so make excuses for yourself.

Too often in our spiritual work we fix our mind upon the differences rather than upon the similarities. For instance, David might have said, "I would not mind another lion. I can manage lions. I would not be afraid of half-a-dozen more bears, I am used to bears. But this Philistine is a new sort of monster." No, David saw it was the same thing after all a little different in shape but the same brute force—and so he went at it with courage. But *we* say, "Alas, there is a great difference. Our present trials have

an unusual bitterness in them." "I," cries the widow, "I lost my husband and God helped and my son has been a stay to me. But now he, too, is gone, and I have no other son and no one to fall back upon." She points out the difference, though the trouble is virtually the same. Would it not be far better if she pleaded the same promise and believed in the Lord as she did before? One man will say, "Ah yes, I did, on such an occasion, run all risks for God. But, you see, there is a difference here." I know there is, my dear brother, there is a little difference and if you fix your eyes on that, you will drill yourself into unbelief. But difference or no difference, where duty calls or danger be never wanting there, or if you should be called to bear such an affliction as never befell mortal man before, yet remember God's arm is not shortened that He cannot deliver His servants. You have but to commit yourself to Him and out of the sevenfold adversity you shall come forth a sevenfold conqueror.

We are very apt, too, to look back upon the past and say, "I know that there are some grand things the Lord did for me and my venture for His sake turned out well, but I do not know what I should have done if a happy circumstance had not occurred to help me just in the nick of time." We dare to attribute our deliverance to some very "happy accident". It is very base of us to do so, for it was the Lord who helped us from first to last—the happy occurrence was a mere second cause. And cannot God give us another "happy accident," if necessary, in this present trouble? "Alas," our unbelief says, "there was a circumstance in that case which really did alter it, and I cannot expect anything like that to occur now." Oh, how wrong this is of us! How we lose the force of that blessed reasoning from parallels which might have supplied us with courage! God grant we may break loose from this net.

Possibly our coward heart suggests "Perhaps, after all, this deed of courage may not be quite my calling and I had better not attempt it." David might have said, "I am a shepherd and I can fight with lions, but I was never trained to war, and therefore I had better let this Philistine alone." He might also have discovered that he was better adapted for protecting sheep than for becoming the champion of a nation. We must guard against the use of this plausible pretext, for pretext it is. Brethren, if we have achieved success by the power of God, let us not dote upon some supposed adaptation, but stand prepared to be used of the Lord in any other way which He may choose. Adaptation is unknown till the event proves it—and our Lord is a far better judge of that than we are. If you see before you a work by means of which you can glorify God and bless the church, do not hesitate, but enter upon it in reliance upon your God. Do not stand stuttering and stammering and talking about qualifications and so on, but what your hand finds to do, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus who has bought you with His blood. Prove your qualifications by bringing Goliath's head back with you and no further questions will be asked by anyone—or by yourself.

So, too, sometimes we frame an excuse out of the opinions of others. We are apt to feel that we really must consider what other people say. Our good brother Eliab may be a little crusty in temper, but still, he is a man of a good deal of prudence and experience. And he tells us to be

quiet and let these things alone and perhaps, we had better do so. And there is Saul. Well, he is a man of great acquaintance with such matters. He judges that we had better decline the task and therefore, upon the whole we had better exhibit that prudence which is the better part of valor and not rush upon certain danger and probable destruction. This seeking advice and following cowardly counsel is all too common. We know that some strenuous effort is needed and it is in our power, but we desire ease and therefore, we employ other men to weave excuses for us. It would be more honest to say outright that we do not want to do any more. Were we more full of love to Jesus, this unworthy device would be scorned by us, and in sacred manliness of mind we would scorn the counsel which tends to cowardice. Others cannot bear our responsibility—we must, each one, give an account of himself to God—why, then, yield to the judgement of men? Oh, brethren, fling this folly to the winds. Obey the dictates of the Holy Spirit and close your ears to the advice of unbelief.

Men or women consecrated to God, if the Lord impels you to do anything for Him, do not ask me, do not ask my fellow church officers, but go and do it. If God has helped you in the past, draw a parallel and argue from it that He will help you in the present. Go, and the Lord go with you. Do not fall prey to that wicked unbelief which would rob you of your strength.

III. The last thing is RESULTS. The results were, first, that David felt he would, as he did before, *rely upon God alone*. Come to the same resolution, brethren. God, alone is the source of power. He alone can render real aid. Let us then rest in Him, even if no other help appears. Is not the Lord alone enough? That arm which you cannot see will never be palsied. Its sinews will never crack, but all the arms of mortals upon which you so much love to lean must one day turn to dust in the tomb. And while they live, they are but weakness itself. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. David had found wisdom's self when he said, "My soul waits only upon God, for my expectation is from Him."

David resolved, again, *to run all risks once mor*e, as he had done before. As he had ventured himself against the lion, so would he put his life in His hands and engage the Philistine. Come wounds and maiming, come piercing spear or cutting sword, come death itself, amid the taunts and exultations of his giant foe, he would still dare everything for Israel's sake and for God's sake. Soldiers of the cross, if you feel that you can do this, be not slow to put it into practice. Throw yourselves wholly into the Lord's service. Consecrate yourselves and your substance to the grand end of glorifying Christ, fighting against error, and plucking souls from destruction.

David's next step was *to put himself into the same condition as on former occasions*, by divesting himself of everything that hampered him. He had fought the lion with nature's weapons and so would he meet the Philistine. Off went that glittering royal helmet which, no doubt, made his head ache with its weight. Off went the cumbersome armor in which he found it very hard to move. In such a metallic prison, he did not feel

like David a bit and therefore, he put all aside and wore only his shepherd's frock. As for that magnificent sword which he had just strapped by his side, he felt that it would be more ornament than use—and so he laid it aside with the rest of the trappings. He put on his pouch and took nothing with him but his sling and stones. This was the old style and he did well to keep to it, for the Lord saves not with sword and spear. We are all too apt to get into a fine harness and tie ourselves up with rules and methods. The art of getting rid of all baggage is a noble one, but few have learned it. Look at our churches. Look at the church at large—is there not enough red tape about to strangle a nation? Have we not committees enough to sink a ship with their weight? As for patrons, presidents, vice-presidents, and secretaries, had not Christianity been divine it could not have lived under the load of these personages who sit on her bosom. The roundabouts are worrying straightforward action out of the world. We are organized into strait waistcoats. The vessel of the church has such an awful lot of top-hamper that I wonder how she can be navigated at all. And if a tempest were to come on, she would have to cut herself free from nearly all of it. When shall we get at the work? If there should ever come a day when brothers will go forth preaching the Gospel, simply resting in faith upon the Lord alone, I, for one, expect to see grand results. But at present, Saul's armor is everywhere. When we get rid of formality in preaching, we shall see great results. But the churches are locked up in irons which they call armor. Why, dear me, if we are to have a special service, one brother must have it conducted in the Moody method and another can only have Sankey hymns. Who, then, are we that we must follow others? Do not talk to us about innovations and all that—away with your rubbish! Let us serve God with all our hearts and preach Jesus Christ to sinners with our whole souls—the mode is of no consequence. To preach down priestcraft and error, and do it in the simplest possible manner—by preaching up Christ—is the way of wisdom. We must preach, not after the manner of doctors of divinity, but after the manner of those unlearned and ignorant men in the olden time that had been with Jesus and learned of Him. Brethren, some of you have too much armor on. Take it off. Be simple, be natural, be artless, be plain-spoken, be trustful in the living God and you will succeed. Less of the artificer's brass and more of heaven-anointed manhood is needed. More sanctified naturalness and less of studied artificialness. O Lord, send us this, for Christ's sake. Amen.

The ultimate result was that the young champion came back with Goliath's head in his hand. And equally sure triumphs await every one of you if you rely on the Lord and act in simple earnestness. If for Christ, my sister, you will go forward in His work, resting upon Him, you shall see souls converted by your instrumentality. If, my brother, you will but venture everything for Christ's glory and depend, alone on Him, what men call fanaticism shall be considered by God to be only sacred consecration and He will send you the reward which He always gives to a full, thorough, simple, unselfish faith in Himself.

If the result of my preaching this sermon should be to stir up half a dozen workers to some venturesome zeal for God, I shall greatly rejoice. I

remember when I commenced this work in London, God being with me, I said if He would only give me half a dozen good men and women, a work would be done, but that if I had half a dozen thousand sleepy people nothing would be accomplished. At this time I am always afraid of our falling into a lethargic condition. This church numbers nearly 5,000 members, but if you are only 5,000 cowards, the battle will bring no glory to God. If we have one David among us, that one hero will do wonders. But think what an army would be if all the soldiers were Davids—it would be an ill case with the Philistines, then. Oh that we were all Davids, that the weakest among us were as David and David himself were better than he is, and became like an angel of the Lord! God's Holy Spirit is equal to the doing of this and why should He not do it? Let us call to Him for help and that help will come.

I must just say this word to some here present who lament that there is nothing in this sermon for them. Unconverted persons, you cannot draw any argument from your past experience, for you have none of a right kind. But you may draw comfort, and I pray you do, from another view of this story. Jesus Christ, the true David, has plucked some of us like lambs from between the jaws of the devil. Many of us were carried captive by sin. Transgression had so encompassed us about that we were unable to escape. But our great Lord delivered us. Sinner, why can He not deliver you? If you cannot fight the lion of the pit, HE can. Do you ask me, What are you to do? Well, call for His help as loudly as you can. If you are like a lamb, bleat to Him, and the bleating of the lamb will attract the shepherd's ear. Cry mightily unto the Lord for salvation and trust alone in the Lord Jesus. He will save you. If you were between the jaws of hell, yet, if you believed in Him, He would surely pluck you out of destruction. God grant you may find it so, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
1 Samuel 17:23-51.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—73, 674, 681.

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JESUS IN OUR MIDST
NO. 1254

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 12, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and said unto them, Peace be with you." John 20:19.

WE do not wonder that when certain devout Greeks came up to keep the feast at Jerusalem they said to Philip, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Who would not want to see Him? Who that has been redeemed by His precious blood does not long to behold Him? As a child pines for its mother, so have we been sick with strong desire to behold our Lord. Yet to see the King in His beauty with these eyes of ours is denied to us for the present. But the reasons for delay are so gracious that we are well content to tarry. It is better for us that the bodily presence of our Lord should be withdrawn, for otherwise the Comforter would not come unto us and the Comforter, even the blessed Spirit, brings us richer gifts than even the personal presence of Christ could have conferred. Still, reasons cannot utterly remove longings, and we would still be glad to behold our Lord. Is it not natural that a soldier should wish to hear his Captain's voice? At least there is something excusable about it, if every now and then, we dare to wish that we could have a glimpse, even if it were ever so short, of our own Well-Beloved altogether lovely Lord. If we could but catch a glimpse of that face whose brightness outshines the sun, how it would stimulate us. But, brethren, it must not be, until He Himself shall come, or till He shall take us up to be with Him where He is, we must be content with faith and postpone our desires for sight.

So far as the needs of the gospel kingdom are concerned, the need for eye-witnesses is over. Apostles who had seen the Lord are required no more. Forty days of our Savior's tarrying here below sufficed to let a sufficient number of persons fully assure themselves that He had actually risen from the dead. And Jesus took great care that there should be left behind a body of evidence concerning the actual resurrection of His body which would render that fact indisputably certain to all candid minds. Probably there is no statement of human history which is better sustained by evidence than this fact—that Jesus of Nazareth who hung upon the cross and died, did afterwards rise again from the dead. The time of eye-witnesses is now over. More evidence would be superfluous and we are now in the mid-ocean of faith. The Lord knows that sight interferes with faith, and therefore, He does not give us a mixture of the two. We do not walk by sight and faith, but, "We walk by faith, *not by sight*." To let

us occasionally see would in fact remove us out of the realm of faith and bring us down from the high position of believers to the low platform of sightseers. Adieu, therefore, for a while, O sight.

Yet, dear brethren, there are spiritual visits from Jesus which are more than sufficient substitutes for His bodily presence and these we may still desire and expect. Christ may be really present where He is not materially present. There is a discerning of the presence of Christ which we must all have, especially when we come to the communion table, for we are told that he who there discerns not the Lord's body eats and drinks unworthily. There is a discerning of the Lord's presence in the midst of His people which is essential to the power of our assemblies. I pray that we may have this, even now, and if we do, we shall not be a whit behind those who saw Jesus with their eyes and heard Him with their ears. I do not think there is any privilege which the actual bodily presence of Christ could bestow which we may not obtain at this moment by the actual spiritual presence of Christ, if we do but exercise faith in Him as being in the midst of us. He has said, "Lo, I am with you always," and this is the pledge of every conceivable good. Concerning this presence I shall speak, using the story as told by the evangelists as a sort of type of that spiritual communion which I hope we may now realize.

I. Our first point this morning shall be, THERE IS A PECULIAR MANNER IN OUR LORD'S COMING TO HIS DISCIPLES.

You will see first that *He comes gladly to them*. I am sure He came gladly, for He came so soon and so often. First, He appeared to Mary Magdalene, then to Simon, then to the two at Emmaus, and then to the eleven at Jerusalem. There are at least four times in a day in which the Risen One seeks His brethren. These visits of His were in different places, somewhat remote from each other. It was a busy day with Him, this first day after He had risen from the dead. How true it was after His resurrection, even as it was in ages long ago, that His delights were with the sons of men. He evidently loved to be where His people were. He might have gone away and spent the 40 days in the desert, triumphing on the scene of His former conflict. Or He might have surveyed the earth in lonely travel, but instead thereof He spent His sacred leisure with His people. And on the first day after He had risen from the grave, we have record of no less than four interviews which He had with His disciples. Remember that on each occasion He came right willingly and showed Himself freely. Magdalene, it is true, went to the tomb seeking Him, but He might readily have remained unknown had He so desired. I know not where Simon was when his Lord met him, but he also did not find Him as the result of search. As for the two disciples at Emmaus, they were going away from Jerusalem and evidently were not seeking Him, yet He joined Himself to their company. And the eleven had met to console each other, but not to meet with Jesus—that was a matter beyond their expectation. The doors were shut. No sentinel stood ready to look for the appearing of the Lord Jesus, but He came to them all of a sudden, an uninvited guest. I gather from this, beloved, that our blessed Lord delights to manifest Himself to

His people even now, for we know that He is the same as always. After a spiritual manner, He is glad to come and sup with us that we may sup with Him. He is not reluctant to visit the places where His people assemble. It is the joy of His soul to look those in the face for whom He shed His blood and to hear their prayers and praises and accept their offerings. You have not today, therefore, in the prayer which I trust you are breathing to Him, to urge an unwilling guest to come where He cares not to be. You have not to lay hold of Him and constrain Him, saying, "Abide with us." He will be glad to reveal Himself to you as He does not unto the world. Jesus comes cheerfully where He is cheerfully received. He even comes to those who invite Him not and therefore, He will surely turn aside and tarry with you who are longing for fellowship with Him.

He came on that occasion also *to those who were quite unworthy of so great a privilege*—for who were those eleven? God forbid we should say a hard word against those honored men, but in reference to their Master they had not behaved as they should have done. It is written, "Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled." Among that eleven, there was not one who had stood up in his Lord's defense, not even the man who had leaned his head upon His bosom. No, one who was not the least among them had, with oaths and cursing, denied Him. They had not forgotten Him or renounced His cause, or else they would not have met as they were doing. But they had all disbelieved the promise of His return, or else they had not met in fear and trembling as they did that night. I think some leaders would have refused to acknowledge such followers, or at best would have sent them cold commands and denied them their company till they were in a better spirit. Our Master came to His cowardly, faithless disciples and stood in the midst of them uttering the cheering salutation, "Peace be with you!" My soul, why should He not come to you, though you are the most unworthy of all whom He has bought with His blood? Though you assuredly have been unfaithful, cowardly, and unbelieving, yet even upon you may His light arise and into your ears may He speak the peaceful benediction, even as He did unto the eleven. This ought to be a point of great comfort to you this morning, and great incitement to hope that you will obtain the Lord's spiritual presence, unworthy though you are.

Note again, the manner of His coming. He came to the full assembly of the apostles and their companions, *after He had been seen by the few*. That is to say, first one had seen Him, then another one. And then two—and then the full quorum of the eleven and they that were with them were favored with His company. I am glad, my brethren, to know that this morning early, soon after break of day, a few of the household of faith met under this roof and found their Master among them displaying His love. I know also that a second time, before we assembled in this upper room for worship, there was in the basement below another company gathered together, who sought and found our Lord. And moreover, one at least is here who saw Jesus early this morning in his own chamber while privately worshipping. These are good tokens, my brethren, for now that

we have all come together, many more than eleven, and now that all our hearts are eager after Him, we shall surely meet with Him. Since the brothers and the sisters say, "We have seen Him this morning. We saw Him in our chambers. We saw Him as we walked to the house of prayer. We met Him in the early morning prayer meeting," this is good news to us and confirms our hope that He will come to us, also. Yes, beloved, He will come to the feast. Even now I see Him and His presence makes my heart burn within me.

Our Lord came to His disciples *when they were met together quietly*, secluded from the world, shut in as much as they could be from its cares and distractions. The eleven and the more trustworthy brethren had appointed this midnight rendezvous for no purpose but that of quietly considering their condition, cheering each other's hearts, and waiting upon God. They had nothing to buy or sell, or debate upon. They had laid aside business cares and domestic troubles and then their Master came. It is a good thing for the saints to be shut in and the world shut out. I hope we are in that position now. You must not expect Jesus to show Himself to you if your heart is at home with the children, or away at the workshop, or traveling to and fro through the earth, seeking after vanity. But with the doors all shut about us, even in this great Tabernacle, we shall see our Beloved. If we can but shut the world out, we may expect to feel His presence and to have Him breathe upon us as He did upon those of old. Not in the noisy street, but in the quiet chamber, Jesus comes. Not at the market, but in the meeting. Not in the street, but in the sanctuary will His gathered people have their clearest sights of Him.

Having all met together, the next noticeable point as to the Lord's coming was that *they were all thinking about Him and talking about Him*. The uppermost subject was Jesus whom they had followed as their Master and whom they had seen die—and of whom it was said that He had risen from the dead. I suppose they prayed together, but I am sure their prayers all had reference to Him. I do not think they sang, but if they did, I think they must have selected a psalm which had an evident allusion to Him. Some of them may have spoken. I have no doubt Simon Peter did, but it must have been to tell how the Lord had revealed Himself to Him and was risen indeed. And Magdalene in that quiet assembly may have again told of the vision of angels which she saw and how she met the Master and mistook Him for a gardener. And now there come in two brothers, sweating from their rapid journey from Emmaus, who are just in time before the assembly breaks up to repeat the same gladsome tidings. Everything that night was about Jesus, directly and distinctly about Him. There were no discussions as to doctrines and no questions about ordinances. They spoke wholly of Jesus who died, Jesus who was said to have risen, and they said one to another, is it indeed so? Thus while all their hearts and tongues were taken up with Him, Jesus manifested Himself to them. Now I hope our Lord will come this morning, for I know some who think less and less every day of everything but Jesus. They now account a sermon to be precious or to be vile in proportion as

it is full of Him, and reckon a day well spent or ill just in proportion as they have spent it with Him. He is the Alpha and Omega, head, front, chief, Lord, all, yes, all in all to us. And if there are many such present today, you may depend upon it, Jesus will not stay away and we shall feel the delights of His fellowship.

Still, someone will say, "Perhaps He will not come here, for there are many barriers and we ourselves are not, perhaps, in the very best condition to receive Him." Stop, brethren, and ask yourselves—were there no difficulties *then?* The doors were shut and the disciples were in fear. I do not know how Jesus came into the room. Some think He passed through the closed door by miracle, albeit that His body was substantial flesh and bone. Others suggest that He opened the door by miracle and then it closed again. I care not how, but there He was, though the doors were shut. And I know this, that whatever doors there may be between my Lord and my soul, though they were doors made of seven times plated steel, He could pass through them or could open them to get at my heart when it longs after Him. Brethren, if there are mountains between you and Christ, behold, He comes leaping like a roe or a young hart over the separating hills. Nothing can keep Him back from you except yourself—and if you will that He should come—He wills to come and is on His way, even now. No considerations of domestic suffering or of personal pain. No remembrance of the trials of the week, or even the present temptations of Satan shall avail to keep back your Lord and Master. Surely you are aware He can make your soul like the chariots of Amminadab. But perhaps you are afraid He will not visit you because you have a fear which you cannot shake off. So had the disciples, or they would not have closed the doors so carefully. They feared the Jewish mob which might try to slay them as they had done their Lord. And though you may be fearing the troubles of the week before you, the Lord will not despise you for it. Perhaps some very heavy cloud hangs over your spirit right now. Well, your Lord can pierce through clouds. Does not the sun look forth from the heavens though the morning is lowering and dreary? Shines he not even though the fogs and mists gather about our city? And Jesus comes, though sins encompass us and doubts and fears and cares hang thick about our path. He comes as the dew which waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men. I see no reason why now, at this very instant, we may not hear the voice of our Beloved. Blessed Lord, we beseech You to come, for come You can, as well we know. At favored times, I have felt as though His very shadow were over me, as though the touch of His right hand was upon me, and I heard Him say to me, "Fear not, I am He that lives and was dead." And why not again? Why not now? There are many reasons which make us hope that we shall, this morning, behold Him. Let us look up and with one hearty cry say, "Come, Savior, and reveal Yourself to us now as You do not unto the world."

II. Secondly, OUR SAVIOR HAD A PECULIAR MANNER WHEN HE WAS COME, so, if He is here this morning, we may expect Him to be here in something like the following fashion.

He stood in the midst of them. He stood, suddenly stood—where they had seen no one the moment before—He stood, plainly revealed. He did not flash across the room like a meteor, but He remained in one position as though He meant to tarry for a while. *He stood in the midst*—He took the place which a teacher should occupy, the position which naturally belongs to the Master and Lord. I rejoice to think of my Lord Jesus as taking the midst of the circle when He visits His brethren. I love the name of Calvin, but I always regard him as sitting on one side of the room. And I love the name of Wesley, but I regard him as occupying another side place in the assembly. There are many preachers in the church, but not one of them is in the midst of the family circle of the redeemed. The Lord alone is there—the center of all hearts. Others are present and they shine with differing lights, but He is the sun. He is the center and ruler of the system of His church. This morning, in addressing you, I stand in body in your midst, but no doubt my preaching does not consort with the experiences and feelings of all present. I must stand on one side, but if my Lord will reveal Himself to you, I am sure we will all give Him the chief place. He will be the center of all our loves and delights. I would not yield precedence to you, brethren, in my desire to honor my Lord as the chief Beloved of my soul, and I feel sure that whatever your condition, you all agree to magnify *Him* and are all glad to look in the same direction, namely, to Him alone. Though our views may sometimes differ, yet our views about Jesus are the same, and our hearts' best affections all unite in Him. Well, then, if He is here this morning, we shall all feel that we find a common meeting place in Him, that our confidence is in Him, our consecration is to Him, we belong to Him, He belongs to us, and we are happiest among the happy because He gathers us all around His loving heart.

When He stands in the midst, the next thing we find is that *He speaks, and His word is,* "*Peace be with you.*" The presence of Christ, this morning, will be signaled by the bestowal of a deep sense of peace. You will not be able to tell one another why you feel such profound quiet, but it will vividly come before you that Jesus loved you from before the foundations of the world, that your names are engraved upon His hands, that He has bought you with His precious blood, that you are near and dear to Him and that where He is, there you shall be also, and your souls will feel as if they were more than content. Your experience will be that of the psalmist when he said, "My soul is even as a weaned child." It is a glad hour when we need nothing more, but are filled with all the fullness of God. When we can heartily say, "Whom have I in heaven but You, and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside You?" Cares are gone, delight is come, longings are satisfied and desires fall asleep on His bosom when Jesus is present. No sound of war is in the camp, nor voice of them that mourn. The time of the singing birds is come and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.

After observing that our Lord spoke, we next find that *He showed*—showed Himself to His disciples. Jesus did not come into their midst to

show them a new thought, a philosophic discovery, a deep doctrine, a profound mystery, or indeed anything but *Himself*. He was a sacred egoist that day, for what He spoke of was Himself, and what He revealed was Himself. What a sight was that for the disciples! They saw the very Christ. They had seen Him for three years before, but not as one who had been dead and passed through the sepulcher. And now He stood before them as the first-begotten from the dead. The most conspicuous things He showed in Himself were His wounds—His hands, His feet, His side. Oh, if my Lord is present here this morning, the chief object of faith's vision will be Himself—and the most conspicuous point in Himself will be the emblems of His passion. The mind cannot contemplate a more blessed object than the wounds of Jesus—founts of redemption, doors of eternal life, sources of hope, seal of heaven. Look, you saints, look even now to your crucified Savior! As far as He enables you, come close to Him and put your finger into the nail prints, and say, "My Lord and my God". Those sacred scars of His are the sure tokens of sin forgiven, punishment borne by the Substitute, and the soul forever emancipated from her slavery. This is what Jesus does when He comes to us in spirit—He makes Himself dearer than ever by fuller and more condescending discoveries of His love, so that we know and believe the love which He has towards us.

In so doing *our Lord opens up the Scriptures*. He did so to the eleven. Jesus Christ's presence is always known by His people by the value and the beauty which they are led to attach to the Scripture at such times. The Bible is one book in the dark and another book in the light. Do you not sometimes take up the Scripture and as you read it, feel that it is like reading any other book only that it involves a responsibility which another book does not bring upon you? At such seasons, you get no sweetness out of it, but rather bitterness. But when Jesus takes the Book, He looses the seven seals, and with His finger lights up every line and bids you look, if you will, through the hole in His hand and read the promises in that fashion. Ah, how they glow and glisten! Then the Book talks with you and you detect the voice to be that of the Beloved Himself. There is life in the Lord because Christ is there who is the way, the truth, and the life—and is Himself the eternal Logos, the true Word of God. Yes, Jesus Christ's presence never teaches a man to despise Scripture and look to inner light, or personal revelation—for much of supposed special revelation is the child of superstition and conceit—whereas in the Scriptures we have a more sure word of testimony. The more light a man has directly from the Spirit, the more he prizes the light of the Spirit in the Word. And the more truly he gets into communion with the unseen Christ, the more does he delight in the truth as revealed to him in the pages of inspiration. May we know Christ's presence by that sign and token this morning!

Dear friends, the Lord's presence among His followers that day had this peculiarity about it again that then *they forgot all their fears*. As He had given them peace with God, so now He puts aside the fear of the Jews and every other fear which had distressed them. They had been

frightened at first. They thought He was a spirit, but now as they gathered about Him and saw Him eat with them, they gathered around Him as sheep around a shepherd, and they felt at home. I am sure as they went to their houses; they had no fears of Jews as they passed through the midnight streets. And when they reached their doors, they felt joyous and light of heart. Whatever their pecuniary circumstances may have been, they had no longer any care, for they had seen the Lord. Jesus Christ's presence will be known to you this day by the forgetting of your cares. There is a text in Solomon where he says, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that are of heavy hearts. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and renumber his misery no more." The love of Jesus is that blessed strong drink whose presence is the wine of which if a man will drink, he shall forgot his misery and shall remember his sorrow no more. If Jesus Christ does but give to the man of downcast spirit, the spiced wine of His pomegranate by making him feel that He is near him and that He loves him—if He does but make him conscious that the Redeemer's self is no fiction but a very present friend and helper—then whatever the trial may be, he shall bear it readily. The cross shall cease to be a load and the road beneath his pilgrim foot shall become smooth.

Brethren, we cannot enjoy as yet the presence of Christ corporeally, but I have already shown you that all the blessings which His bodily presence could bestow, we can realize if our Lord, after the same fashion, shall be present with us spiritually today.

III. Now thirdly, THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST WITH HIS DISCIPLES EXCITED VARIOUS EMOTIONS. These emotions may be excited by His spiritual presence quite as readily.

At first they were terrified, for they thought Him a spirit. It is a sad sign of man's depraved nature and of his gross carnality that the presence of a spirit is the source of alarm to him. If we were more spiritual than we are, we should not fear to meet beings of our own order, but should delight to think of the presence of disembodied spirits and should be glad enough to commune with them. Because the disciples were unspiritual, they were alarmed and when the alarm ceased a little, Jesus said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" I suppose they began to think of their ill conduct to their Master and conscience made them tremble. We are told by Mark that He also upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart. In gentle tones, He chided them for having been so unbelieving and they must have felt this also to be a source of troubled thoughts. Meanwhile, they doubted whether it could be the risen Savior. But when they were convinced by indisputable signs, they greatly rejoiced and almost at the same time the very vividness of their joy blinded them into another doubt. Like a pendulum, they swung from joy to unbelief. After doubt went, they rejoiced, and then wonder came, and then doubt again, so that they scarcely knew where they were, they were in such a state of excitement. John, if you notice, gives a very calm account of it all, for he

looked at it rather from Christ's point of view than from the disciples' and having had his head so lately on Christ's bosom, he was, perhaps, more believing than the rest. Luke's picture of it shows us the contending emotions at work in the breasts of the assembled brethren, for Luke was a physician and accustomed to watch symptoms and phases of feeling. He looked at it from the human side and therefore, he gives us a fuller description of the tossing to and fro, the hopes, fears, joys, sorrows, questions, and comforts of the hour.

Well, we will leave the eleven and come to ourselves. Suppose a moment, that our Lord were actually to appear among us this morning? I will not say I wish He would, because we know Him no more after the flesh and there is no blessing which His corporeal presence could bestow but what we have already in His spiritual presence. But if He were to come, my brethren, what would be our state of mind towards Him? I hope we should not be terrified. I think the most of us who believe in Him would be more likely to be overjoyed than at all frightened, but I am sure we should all be filled with *the profoundest awe*. The sight of HIM, our Master and Lord! Should we not, like John in Patmos, fall at His feet as dead? Would not the bliss of that vision be too great for these frail bodies? At any rate, we would devoutly bow the knee before Him and reverently adore Him. And oh what adoration would we give to the Lamb that once was slain! To that dear and ever blessed Son of God who has washed us from our sins in His own blood. Brethren, we would turn this Tabernacle into a temple and this hallowed hour into a fragment of heaven's eternity. If our Lord would but come here and show Himself among us, what overflowing love should He have from us! How would our hearts melt while He spoke! Brethren, He is here! Let us give that loving adoration to Him even now. Let us bow before Him and with prostrate reverence of heart worship the Divine Son. Why should it not be so? Brethren, may the Holy Spirit lead you into the depths of devotion now.

I have no doubt we should feel a marvelous degree of *serene joy* to think that at length we were with our Lord. When we went home and told our friends who were not here, we would say to them, "We have had some sweet Sundays, but we have never before had such a Lord's-Day as this, for He who is Alpha and Omega walked among us and spoke with us. We forgot the preacher—he went back to his seat and held his head in delight—we thought no more about him, for his Lord absorbed our attention. The joy we had in seeing Jesus was worth dying for." Well, dear friends, we shall not have our Lord's crucified body here so as to feel peace from the sight of our eyes and the hearing of our ears, but He is here really. And all the facts which cluster around His presence which would be legitimate reasons for peaceful joy, we have already, for He has died and redeemed us and He has gone into His glory. And remember, He is pleading for us and He is coming again to take us home to Himself, and these are the fundamental reasons for peace. We have all the real causes of joy that we should have if the man of Nazareth did stand in our

midst. Therefore, let us be calmly glad and wholly at rest this morning. God help us to be so!

Surely, also, many would be melted down with *deep contrition* in our Redeemer's presence. Some of us would have to say, "Lord and Master, have You come to ask an account of our stewardship? We are ashamed to look You in the face, we have done so little for You." There is one who might say, "I have been a member of a church for years, but I have neither helped in the school, preached in the villages, visited the sick, nor rendered any service whatever. I have eaten the fat and drank the sweet in the house of the Lord, but that is all that I have done." Brethren, here, before the spiritually present Lord, you may make the same confessions and be humbled on account of them. I wish you would. Though Jesus is not here with that dear face to tenderly chide you, yet He is here, by His blessed Spirit, to gently remind you of your forgotten obligations. By His wounds and by His bloody sweat, I do entreat you to be loiterers no longer, but go work in His vineyard and cease not till life's sun goes down.

"Ah," says one, "but if our Lord were here, I would tell Him my great trouble and ask for His sympathy and help. I would come to His feet and beseech Him to save my husband and to convert my ungodly son." Do it, sister, do it now, for He will hear you as assuredly as if we heard His footsteps in these aisles. His Spirit, who has put the desire into your soul, is the pledge of His presence. Breathe the prayer and expect the blessing and your expectation shall not fail.

I hear another believer cry out, "Ah, if my Lord were here before me, I would pour out my glad soul in praise and tell Him how I love Him. I would kiss His feet and wash them with my tears." Do it now, my friend, for though you have not the flesh and blood of Christ present, yet Jesus in spirit is here and though His body is up in glory, yet your tears and thankfulness will reach Him and be as acceptable to Him as if He were here in body. Even now His heart will accept the emotions of your soul. Let them flow out before Him as perfume from the flowers.

"Ah," says one, "if I did but see the Lord I should leave this morning's assembly feeling that I could now lead a higher life than ever I had led before. I could not look at Him without saying, 'You altogether lovely One, I pledge myself to You, for You to live, for You to die and all I have and all I am shall be Yours forever.'" Beloved, do it unrestrainedly and unfeignedly even now. Do it now, I say, for He will just as well accept you, looking out from the glory land above, as though He looked down upon you from this platform.

I wonder what the scene would be with some hypocrites who are present if Christ were to come. Ah, how they would wish they had never made a profession of religion. Oh Judas, Judas, how would you bear to see the risen glory of Him whom you betrayed? Are you here this morning, Judas? And you, vacillating Pilate, who knew the right but did the wrong—how will you meet the Man in whom you found no fault but yet condemned to die? There may be many here who have despised Him, who have reviled His people, and ridiculed His gospel, albeit that Jesus

shed His blood for the sons of men. Well, although Jesus is not here in body, yet will He soon come in person to judge the quick and dead, and if you dare not meet Him now, how will you meet Him then? Thus says the Lord, prepare for His advent, for behold He comes to judge mankind, and woe onto those who shall be found wanting in the day of His appearing.

IV. The last thing of all is this. Jesus Christ, when He came among His disciples, LEFT CERTAIN PERMANENT GIFTS which also can be realized by His spiritual presence. One of the most precious gifts He left them was *the realization of His person*. Those who saw Him that day never thought of Him, from then on, as a mere historical person, or a dream, or a phantom. You have read a great many histories but you have never realized the persons of history as you have realized your own father and mother and children. But the disciples must have realized Christ, for they saw Him and some of them touched Him and put their finger into the print of the nails. Now, it is very desirable that we should, all of us, realize the reality of Jesus Christ as God and Man, and we can do it this morning, if He will come and overshadow us with His presence. There are some of us to whom Christ has been a world more real than ourselves, for we have sometimes scarcely known whether we were in the body or out of the body, when He has been near. But we have always known whether *He* was in the body or out of the body. We have felt as if wife and father and mother were shadows that would pass away—but we have realized the eternal existence of Christ and have known that He could not pass away. And so spiritually we have grasped Him more firmly than we have our own friends and kin. The most real thing under heaven to my soul is the Lord Jesus Christ. Brethren, can you all say that? If you can, then Christ has been present with you this morning. I do not say that I can use this language always. Alas, alas, when my Lord has gone, it is not so with me! But when I know He is near, there is no force that does so completely constrain me, no impulse that does so utterly hold me spellbound as the impulse that arises from His presence, and the magnificence that flows out of His love shed abroad in my soul. Every child of God knows it is so and thus it is clear that without seeing Christ with the eyes, you can obtain the blessing of realizing Him.

Next He gave to them all *a commission,* He said, "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." He has never laid His hand on your shoulder, my brother, and said, "Go and tell the gospel to poor sinners." He has never touched you, my sister, and said, "Woman, I have sent you to bring your companions to Me. Go and tell them of My love!" No, but He has virtually done it by the commission which He gave to all His disciples. And He does it powerfully and specially by His Spirit to many of us whenever we realize His presence. We cannot sit down at the feet of Christ without feeling that we must work for Him. I defy any man to live near Christ and to be lazy. Our Lord walks a smart pace and if you will keep company with Him you must go His rate. But if you loiter and linger and waste time, Christ will be on ahead and leave you to yourself. I pray Him to commission some of you this morning. I tried last

Sunday morning to call out young heroes for Christ. I do not know whether the Lord called them out by me or not, but I pray that Jesus would do it. If today He should appear, the Crucified One, with face more marred than that of any man—with pierced hands, with side opened by the deep gash—if He should speak personally to each of you, and say, "My son, My daughter, go and serve Me, from this day, until I come," with what energy would you go forth to His service, even if it were to the ends of the earth.

The last gift He gave them was *He breathed on them*. His breath was the Spirit of God. This was the first drop of the shower of the Spirit which afterwards was shed so plenteously at Pentecost. He breathed on them and though they did not get the fullness of the Spirit, yet they obtained a measure of it and they became qualified to fulfill their commission. Oh that He would breathe the Spirit upon us now! No, we need not ask for it, beloved, for our Lord has given the Spirit once and for all to all His people. He has baptized His church into the Holy Spirit and into fire—and the Spirit remains with us always—only you must believe the might which that Spirit bestows upon you. Oh brother, oh sister, I beseech you do not estimate yourself according to your ability, according to your experience, your learning and the like, but according to that divine energy which rests upon you if you are called of God to service. What are the powers within? They are feebleness itself. But the power from above is the power of God. Gird on this mystic belt, this divine omnipotence, and if you know how to wear it by faith, you shall break through a troop and leap over a wall. "All things are possible to him that believes." May Jesus Christ, then, by His Spirit be so among us that each one of us may be conscious of obtaining a fresh anointing this very morning, and in that strength we shall go forth to new service for the glory of God. May God bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Mark 16:9-16; Luke 24:36-44; John 20:19-24.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—907, 766, 785.

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HOW TO CONVERSE WITH GOD
NO. 1255

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 19, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then call, and I will answer: or let me speak, and You answer me."
Job 13:22.

JOB might well have been driven frantic by his miserable comforters. It is wonderful that he did not express himself far more bitterly than he did. Surely Satan found better instruments for his work in those three ungenerous friends than in the marauding Sabeans, or the pitiless whirlwind. They assailed Job remorselessly and seemed to have no more hearts of compassion than so many flint stones. No wonder that he said to them many things which otherwise he would never have thought of uttering and a few, which I dare say, he afterwards regretted. Possibly the expression of our text is one of those passages of too forcible speech. The tormented patriarch did what none but a man of the highest integrity could have done as intensely as he did. He made his appeal from the false judgement of man to the bar of God and begged to be forthwith summoned before the tribunal of the Judge of all, for he was sure that God would justify him. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him: but I will maintain my own ways before Him. He also shall be my salvation: for a hypocrite shall not come before Him." He was ready to appear at the judgment seat of God, there to be tried as to his sincerity and uprightness. He says, "Only do not two things unto me: then will I not hide myself from You. Withdraw Your hand far from me: and let not Your dread make me afraid." He offers, in the words of our text, to come before the righteous Judge in any way which He might appoint—either he will be the defendant and God shall be the plaintiff in the suit—"Call and I will answer," or else he will take up the part of the plaintiff and the Lord shall show cause and reason for His dealings towards him or convict him of falsehood in his pleas—"Let me speak, and You answer me." He feels so sure he has not been a hypocrite that he will answer to the All-Seeing, then and there, without fear of the result.

Now, brethren, we are far from condemning Job's language, but we would be quite as far from imitating it. Considering the circumstances in which Job was placed, considering the hideous libels which were brought against him, considering how he must have been stung when accused so wrongfully at such a time, we do not wonder that he thus spoke. Yet it may be that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips, but at any rate, it is not for us to employ his language in the same sense, or in any measure to enter upon self-justification before God. On the contrary, let our prayer be, "Enter not into judgement with Your servant: for in Your sight shall

no man living be justified." How shall man be just with God? How can we challenge His judgement before whom the heavens are not pure and who charged His angels with folly? Unless, indeed, it is in a gospel sense, when, covered with the righteousness of Christ, we are made bold by faith to cry, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies, who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that has risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."

I am going to use the words of Job in a different sense from that in which he employed them and shall apply them to the sweet communion which we have with our Father, God. We cannot use them in reference to our appearance before His judgment seat to be tried, but they are exactly suitable when we speak of those blessed approaches to the mercy seat when we draw near to God to be enriched and sanctified by sacred communion. The text brings out a thought which I wish to convey to you—"Call and I will answer: or let me speak, and You answer me." May the Holy Spirit bless our meditation.

The three points this morning will be, *two methods of secret conversation*—"Call and I will answer: or let me speak, and You answer me." Secondly, *the method of combining the two*, and here we shall try to show how the two modes of conversation should be united in our communion with God. And thirdly, we shall show *how these two modes of fellowship are realized to the full in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ*, who is our answer to God and God's answer to us.

I. First, then, here are TWO METHODS OF SACRED CONVERSATION BETWEEN GOD AND THE SOUL—sometimes the Lord calls to us and we reply, and at other times we speak to God and He graciously deigns to answer us. A missionary, some years ago, returning from South Africa, gave a description of the work which had been accomplished there through the preaching of the gospel. Among other things, he pictured a little incident of which he had been an eye-witness. He said that one morning he saw a converted African chieftain sitting under a palm tree with his Bible open before him. Every now and then he cast his eyes on his book and read a passage, and then he paused and looked up a little while, and his lips were seen to be in motion. Thus he continued alternately to look down on the Scriptures and to turn his eyes upward towards heaven. The missionary passed by without disturbing the good man, but a little while after he mentioned to him what he had seen and asked him why it was that sometimes he read, and sometimes he looked up? The African replied—"I look down to the Bible and God speaks to me. And then I look up in prayer and speak to the Lord, and in this way we keep up a holy talk with each other." I would set this picture before you as being the mirror and pattern of communion with heaven—the heart hearkening to the voice of God—and then replying in prayer and praise.

We will begin with the first method of communion. *Sometimes it is well in our conversation with God that we should wait till our heavenly Father has spoken*—"Call and I will answer." In this way the Lord communed

with His servant Abraham. If you refer to those sacred interviews with which the patriarch was honored, you will find that the record begins—"The Lord spoke unto Abraham and said." After a paragraph or two you hear Abraham speaking to the Lord and then comes the Lord's reply, and another word from the patriarch. But the conversation generally began with the Lord Himself. So it was with Moses. While he kept his flock in the wilderness, he saw a bush which burned and was not consumed. He turned aside to gaze upon it and then the Lord spoke to him out of the bush. The Lord called first and Moses answered. Notably this was the case in the instance of the holy child, Samuel. While he lay asleep, the Lord said to him, "Samuel, Samuel," and he said, "Here I am," and yet a second and a third time the voice of God commenced a sacred communion. No doubt the Lord had heard the voice of the child in prayer at other times, but upon this notable occasion the Lord first called Samuel, and Samuel answered, "Speak Lord, for Your servant hears." So was it with Elijah. There was a still small voice and the Lord said to the prophet, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Then Elijah replied, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, for they have thrown down Your altars and slain Your prophets with the sword." To which complaint his great Master gave a comfortable answer. Now, as it was with these saints of old, so has it been with us—the Lord our God has spoken to us by His Spirit—and our spiritual ears have listened to His words and thus our communion with heaven has commenced. If the Lord wills to have the first word in the holy conversation which He intends to hold with His servants, God forbid that any speech of ours should interpose. Who would not be silent to hear Jehovah speak?

How does God speak to us then, and how does He expect us to answer?

He speaks to us in the written Word. This "more sure Word of testimony, whereunto you do well if you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place." He speaks to us also in the ministry of His Word, when things new and old which are in Holy Scripture are brought forth by His chosen servants and are applied with power to our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

The Lord is not dumb in the midst of His family, though, alas, some of His children appear to be dull of hearing. Though the Urim and Thummim are no longer to be seen upon the breasts of mortal men, yet the oracle is not silent. O that we were always ready to hear the loving voice of the Lord.

The Lord's voice has many tones, all equally divine. Sometimes He uses the voice of *awakening* and then we should give earnest heed. We are dead and He quickens us. We are sluggish and need to be bestirred and the Lord, therefore, cries aloud to us, "Awake you that sleep." We are slow to draw near to Him and therefore, He lovingly says, "Seek you My face." What a mercy it is if our heart at once answers, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." When He awakens us to duty, there is true communion in our hearts if we at once reply "Here am I, send me." Our inmost souls

should reply to the Lord's call as the echo answers to the voice. I fear it is sometimes far otherwise—and then our loving Lord has His patience tried. Remember how He says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock"? He knocks because He finds that door closed which should have been wide open. Alas, even His knocks are, for a while, in vain, for we are stretched upon the bed of ease and make idle excuses for remaining there—"I have taken off my coat, how can I put it on? I have washed my feet, how can I defile them?" Let us no longer treat Him in this ungenerous manner lest He take it amiss and leave us, for if He goes away from us we shall seek Him but find Him not. We shall call Him but He will give us no answer. If we will not arise at His call, it may be He will leave us to slumber like sluggards till our poverty comes as one that travels and our need as an armed man. If our Beloved cries, "Rise up My love, My fair one, and come away," let us not linger for an instant. If He cries, "Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion," let us arise in the power of His call and shake ourselves from the dust. At the first sound of heaven's bugle in the morning, let us leave the bed of carnal ease and go forth to meet our Lord and King. Herein is communion—the Lord draws us and we run after Him. He arouses us and we wake to serve Him. He restores our soul and our hearts praise Him.

Frequently the voice of God is for our *instruction*. All Scripture is written for that purpose and our business is to listen to its teachings with open ears and willing heart. Well did the Psalmist say, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for He will speak peace unto His people." God's own command of mercy is, "Incline your ear and come unto Me, hear and your soul shall live." This is the very gospel of God to the unsaved ones and it is an equally important message to those who have through grace believed, for they also need to receive of His words. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word which proceeds out of the mouth of God shall men live." Therefore one of the saints cried out, "Your words were found and I did eat them." And another said, "How sweet are Your words unto my taste, yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth." God's Word is the soul's manna and the soul's water of life. How greatly we ought to prize each word of divine teaching. But, dear brethren, do you not think that many are very neglectful of God's instructive voice? In the Bible we have precious doctrines, precious promises, precious precepts, and above all, a precious Christ. If a man would really live upon these choice things, he might rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. But how often is the Bible left unread! And so God is not heard. He calls and we give no heed. As for the preaching of the Word, when the Holy Spirit is in it, it is the "power of God unto salvation," and the Lord is pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. But all believers do not hear the voice of the Lord by His ministers as they should. There is much carping criticism, much coldness of heart, much glorying in man, and a great need of teachableness of spirit, and thus the Word is shut out of our hearts. The Lord would gladly teach us by His servants, but our ears are dull of hearing. Is it any wonder that those professors cannot pray who

are forever grumbling that they cannot hear? God will be deaf to us if we are deaf to Him. If we will not be taught, we shall not be heard. Let us not be as the adder which is deaf to the charmer's voice. Let us be willing, yes, eager to learn. Did not our Lord Jesus say, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me"? And is there not a rich reward for so doing in His sweet assurance, "You shall find rest unto your souls"? Search the Scriptures that no word from the Lord may be inadvertently slighted by you. Hear the Word attentively and ponder it in your heart. Daily make this your prayer, "What I know not, teach me." "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law." Let us strive against prejudice and never let us dream that we are so wise that we need learn no more. Jesus Christ would have us be teachable as little children and ready to receive, with meekness, the engrafted Word which is able to save our souls. You will have a blessed fellowship with your Lord if you will sit at His feet and receive His words. O for His own effectual teaching. Call, O Lord, and I will answer.

The Lord also speaks to His servants with the voice of *command*. Those who trust Christ must also obey Him. In the day when we become the Lord's children, we come under obligations to obey. Does He not Himself say, "If I be a father, where is My honor?" Dear friends, we must never have a heavy ear towards the precepts. I know some who drink in the promises as Gideon's fleece did the dew, but as for the commands, they refuse them as a man turns from wormwood. But the child of God can say, "Oh, how I love Your law. it is my meditation all the day: I will delight myself in Your commandments which I have loved." The will of God is very sweet to His children. They long to have their own wills perfectly conformed to it. True Christians are not pickers and choosers of God's Word—the part which tells them how they should live in the power of the Spirit of God is as sweet to them as the other portion which tells them how they are saved by virtue of the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Dear brethren, if we shut our ears to what Jesus tells us, we shall never have power in prayer, nor shall we enjoy intimate communion with the Well-Beloved. "If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love," He says, "even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love." If you will not hear God, you cannot expect Him to hear you. And if you will not do what He bids you, neither can you expect Him to give you what you seek at His hands. An obedient heart is necessary if there is to be any happy conversation between God and the soul.

The Lord sometimes speaks to His servants in the tone of *rebuke* and let us never be among those who harden their necks against Him. It is not a pleasant thing to be told of our faults, but it is a most profitable thing. Brethren, when you have erred, if you are on good terms with God, He will gently chide you. His voice will sound in your conscience, "My Child, was this right? My Child, was this as it ought to be? Is this becoming in one redeemed with precious blood?" When you open the Bible, many a text will, like a mirror, show you yourself and the spots upon your face. And conscience, looking on, will say, "Do not so, my son, this

is not as your Lord would have it." "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: That which I see not teach me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more." If we do not listen to God's rebuking voice in His Word, He will probably speak in harsher tones by some addicting providence. Perhaps He will hide from us the light of His countenance and deny us the consolations of the Spirit. Before this is the case, it will be wise to turn our hearts unto the Lord, or if it has already come to that, let us say, "Show me why You contend with me. Make me to know my faults, my Father, and help me to purge myself from them." Brethren, be you not as the horse, or as the mule, but pray to be made tender in spirit. Be this your prayer—

"Quick as the apple of an eye,
Oh, God, my conscience make.
Awake, my soul, when sin is near,
And keep it still awake.
Oh may the least omission pain
My well instructed soul
And drive me to the blood again,
Which makes the wounded whole!"

Let us hear Nathan as kindly when he rebukes us as when he brings a promise, for in both cases the prophet speaks his Master's own sure word. Let us thank the Lord for chiding us and zealously set about destroying the idols against which His anger is lifted. It is due to the Lord and it is the wisest course for ourselves.

But blessed be His name, the Lord will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever. Very frequently the Lord speaks to us in *consolatory* language. How full the Bible is of comforts. How truly has God carried out His own precept to the prophet—"Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God." What more, indeed, could God have said than He has said for the consolation of His own beloved? Be not slow to hear when God is swift to cheer you. Alas, our mischief sometimes turns a deaf ear even to the sweetest note of Jehovah's love. We cannot think that all things will work together for our good. We cannot believe that the Providence which looks so evil can really be a blessing in disguise. Blind unbelief is sure to err and it errs principally in stopping its ear against those dulcet tones of everlasting lovingkindness which ought to make our hearts leap within us for joy. Beloved, be not hard to comfort, and when God calls, be ready to answer Him, and say, "I believe You, Lord, and rejoice in Your Word, and therefore my soul shall put away her mourning and gird herself with delight." This is the way to keep up fellowship with God—to hear His consolations and to be grateful for them.

And last of all upon this point, God speaks to His people, sometimes in the tones which *invite to innermost communion*. I cannot tell now how they sound—your ear must itself have heard them to know what they are. Sometimes He calls His beloved ones to come away to the top of Amana, to ascend above the world and all its cares, and to come to the mount of transfiguration. "There," says He, "will I show you My loves." There the Lord seems to lay bare His heart to His child and to tell him all

the heights and depths of love unsearchable. There the Lord allows him to understand his eternal union with Christ and the safety that comes of it. There the Lord reveals the mystical covenant with all its treasures, "For the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." It is a sad thing when the Lord calls us into the secret chamber, where none may approach but men greatly beloved, and we are not prepared to enter. That innermost heart-to-heart communion is not given to him who is unclean. God said even to Moses, "Put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground." There is no enjoying that extraordinary nearness to God with which He sometimes favors His choice ones, unless the feet have been washed in the bronze laver and the hands have been cleansed in innocence. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." He that is of clean hands and a pure heart, he shall dwell on high, but only he, for God will not draw inconsistent professors and those who are dallying with sin into close contact with Himself. "Be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord," and especially be you clean who hope to stand in His holy place and to behold His face, for that face is only to be beheld in righteousness.

Brethren, it is clear that the voice of God speaks to us in different tones and our business, as His children, is to answer at once when He speaks to us. This is one form of holy fellowship.

The second and equally common form is that *we speak to God and He graciously replies to us*.

How should we speak to the Most High? I answer, first, we ought constantly to speak to Him in the tone of *adoration*. We do not, I fear, adore and reverently magnify God one hundredth as much as we should. The general frame of a Christian should be such that whenever his mind is taken off from the necessary thoughts of his calling, he should at once stand before the throne blessing the Lord, if not in words, yet in heart. I was watching the lilies the other day as they stood upon their tall stalks with flowers so fair and beautiful. They cannot sing, but they seemed to me to be offering continual hymns to God by their very existence. They had lifted themselves as near to heaven as they could. Indeed, they would not commence to flower till they had risen as far from the earth as their nature would permit—and then they just stood still in their beauty and showed to all around what God can do—and as they poured out their sweet perfume in silence, they said by their example, "Bless the Lord as we also do by pouring out our very souls in sweetness." Now, you may not be able to preach and it would not be possible to be always singing, especially in some company. But your life, your heart, your whole being should be one perpetual discourse of the lovingkindness of the Lord and your heart, even if the Lord is silent, should carry on fellowship by adoring His blessed name.

Coupled with adoration, the Lord should always hear the voice of our *gratitude*. One of our brethren in prayer last Monday night commenced somewhat in this fashion. He said, "Lord, You do so continuously bless us that we feel as if we could begin to praise You now and never leave off

any more. We are half ashamed to ask for anything more because You do always give so promptly, and so bountifully." In this spirit let us live. Let us be grateful unto Him and bless His name and come into His presence with thanksgiving! The whole life of the Christian man should be a psalm of which the contents should be summed up in this sentence, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name." Now, adoration and thanksgiving, if rendered to God with a sincere heart through Jesus Christ, will be acceptable to God and we shall receive an answer of peace from Him so that we shall realize the second half of the text. "Let me speak, and You answer me."

But, my brethren, it would not suffice for us to come before God with adoration only, for we must remember what we are. Great is He and therefore, to be adored, but sinful are we and therefore, when we come to Him there must always be *confession* of sin upon our lips. I never expect, until I get to heaven, to be able to cease confessing sin every day and every time I stand before God. When I wander away from God, I may have some idea of being holy, but when I draw near to Him I always feel as Job when he said, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes." If you would have the Lord hear, be sure you speak to Him in humble notes. You have rebelled against Him. You are a sinner by nature, and though forgiven and accepted, and therefore freed from dread of wrath, you can never forget that you *were* a rebel—and if it had not been for sovereign grace you would have been so still—therefore speak with lowliness and humility before the Lord if you wish to receive an answer.

Beloved friends, we should also speak to God with the voice of *petition* and this we can never cease to do, for we are always full of wants. "Give us this day our daily bread" must be our prayer as long as we are in the land where daily needs require daily supplies. We shall always need to make request for temporals and for spirituals, for ourselves and for others, too. The work of intercessory prayer must never be allowed to cease. Speak to the Lord, you that have His ear. Speak for us, His servants, who are His ambassadors to men. Speak for the church, also. Plead for rebellious sinners and ask that unnumbered blessings may be given from above.

We should also speak to Him sometimes in the language of *resolution*. If the poor prodigal was right in saying, "I will arise and go to my father," so are Christians right in saying, "Therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live," or in saying, "As long as I live I will bless the Lord." Sometimes when a duty is set before you very plainly which you had for a while forgotten, it is very sweet to say unto the Lord, "Lord, Your servant will rejoice to do this, only help me." Register the secret vow before the Lord, and honorably fulfill it.

We should often use the language of *intimate communion*. "What language is that?" you ask and again I answer, "I cannot tell you." There are times when we say to the blessed Bridegroom of our souls love words which the uncircumcised ear must not hear. Why, even the little that is

unveiled before the world in the Book of Solomon's Song has made many a man quibble, for the carnal mind cannot understand such spiritual secrets. You know how the church cries out concerning her Lord—"Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine." There are many love passages and love words between sanctified souls and their dear Lord and Master which it were not lawful for a man to utter in a mixed assembly—it were like the casting of pearls before swine, or reading one's love letters in the public streets. Oh, you chosen, speak to your Lord. Keep nothing from Him. He has said, "If it were not so, I would have told you." He has told you all that He has seen with the Father. Tell Him everything that is in your heart and when you speak, speak with sacred child-like confidence, telling Him everything. You will find Him answering you with familiar love and sweet will be the fellowship thus created.

Thus I have shown you that there are two forms of the believer's communion with God.

II. Let us now consider THE METHOD OF THE COMBINATION OF THE TWO. With regard to this subject I would say that *they must be united*. Brethren, we sometimes go to prayer and we want God to hear us, but we have not heard what God has to say. This is wrong. Suppose a person neglects the hearing of the Word of God, but is very fond of prayer? I feel certain that his prayer will soon become flat, stale, and unprofitable, because no conversation can be very lively which is all on one side. The man speaks, but he does not let God speak, and therefore, he will soon find it hard to maintain the conversation. If you are earnest in regular prayer, but do not as regularly read or hear the Scriptures, your soul gives out without taking in and is very apt to run dry. Not only thoughts and desires will flag, but even the expressions will become monotonous. If you consider how it is that your prayer appears to lack vivacity and freshness, the probable reason is that you are trying to maintain a maimed fellowship. When conversation is all one-sided, do you wonder that it flags? If I have a friend at my house tonight, and we wish to have fellowship with each other, I must not do all the talking, but I must wait for him to answer me or to suggest new topics, as he may please. And if he is wiser than I am, there is the more reason why I should play second in the conversation and leave its guidance very much to him.

It is such a condescension on God's part to speak with us that we ought eagerly to hear what He has to say. Let Him never have to complain that we turned our ears away from Him. At the same time, we must not be silent ourselves, for to read the Scriptures, to hear sermons and never to pray would not bring fellowship with God. That would be a lame conversation. Remember how Abraham spoke with God again and again, though he felt himself to be but dust and ashes? Remember how Moses pleaded? Do you remember how David sat before the Lord and then spoke with his tongue? Above all, remember how Jesus talked with His

Father as well as listened to the voice from heaven. Let both forms of conversation unite and all will be well.

Again, it will be well sometimes to *vary the order*. Dear Mr. Muller, who is a man living near to God, whose every word is like a pearl, said the other day, "Sometimes when I go into my closet to pray, I find I cannot pray as I would. What do I do then? Why, since I cannot speak to the Lord, I beg the Lord to speak to me and therefore I open the Scriptures and read my portion. And then I find the Lord gives me matter for prayer." Is not this a suggestion of much weight? Does it not commend itself to your spiritual judgement? Have you not observed that when somebody calls to see you, you may not be in a fit condition to start a profitable conversation? But if your friend will lead, your mind takes fire and you have no difficulty in following him. Frequently it will be best to ask the Lord to lead the sacred conversation, or wait awhile till He does so. It is a blessed thing to wait at the posts of His door, expecting a word of love from His throne. It is generally best, in communion with God, to begin with hearing His voice, because it is due to His sacred majesty that we should first hear what He has to say to us. And it will especially be best for us to do so when we feel out of order for communion. If the flesh, in its weakness, hampers the spirit, then let the Bible reading come before the praying, that the soul may be awakened thereby. Still, there are times when it will be better to speak to our heavenly Father at once. For instance, if a child has done wrong, it is very wise of him to run straight away to his father, before his father has said anything to him, and say, "Father, I have sinned." The prodigal had the first word and so should our penitence seek for speedy audience and pour itself out like water before the Lord. Sometimes, too, when our heart is very full of thankfulness, we should allow praise to burst forth at once. When we have received a great favor, we ought not to wait till the giver of it speaks to us, but the moment we see Him we should at once acknowledge our indebtedness. When the heart is full of either prayer or praise, and the presence of Jesus is felt, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we begin addressing the Lord with all our hearts. The Lord has spoken and it is for us to reply at once.

On the other hand, when for wise reasons our Lord is silent unto us, it is well to take with us words and come to Him. If you have read your Bible and have felt no visit from the Holy Spirit, or if you have heard a sermon and found no dew from the Lord attending it, then turn at once to prayer. Tell the Lord your condition and entreat Him to reveal Himself to you. Pray first and read afterwards, and you will find that your speaking with God will be replied to by His speaking to you through the Word. Take the two methods—commonsense and your own experience will guide you—and let sometimes one come first and sometimes the other.

But *let there be a reality about both*. Mockery in this matter is deadly sin. Do not let God's Word be before you as a mass of letterpress, but let the book speak to your soul. Some people read the Bible through in a set time and in great haste—they might just as well never look at it at all.

Can a man understand a country by merely tearing through it at a railway pace? If he desires to know the character of the soil and the condition of the people, he walks leisurely through the land and examines with care. God's Word needs digging or its treasures will lie hidden. We must put our ear down to the heart of Scripture and hear its living throbs. Scripture often whispers, rather than thunders, and the ear must be duly trained to comprehend its language. Resolve emphatically, "I WILL HEAR what God the Lord shall speak." Let God speak to you and in order that He may do so, pause and meditate, and do not proceed till you grasp the meanings of the verses as far as the Spirit enables you. If you do not understand some passages, read them again and again, and remember it is good to read even those parts of Scripture which you do not understand, even as it is good for a child to hear his father's voice whether he understands all his father has to say or not. At any rate, faith finds exercise in knowing that God never speaks in vain, even though He is not understood. Hear the Word till you understand it. While you are listening, the sense will gradually break in upon your soul, but mind that you listen with opened ears and willing heart. When you speak to God, do not let it be a dead form, for that is an insult to the Most High. If the heart is absent, it is as wicked to say a prayer as to be prayerless. If one should obtain an audience of Her Majesty and then should read a petition in which he took no interest, which was, in fact, a mere set of words, it would be an insult of the worst kind. Beware lest you thus insult the Majesty of heaven!

III. The last thought is only meant to be dropped before you for you to enlarge upon it at your leisure—THE BLESSED REALIZATION OF THESE TWO FORMS OF COMMUNION IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST. "Call and I will answer." Infinite majesty of God, call upon me and ask for all You can ask, and I bless You that I have an answer for You. Ask Your poor servant for all You can demand of him and he will gladly reply. Brethren, do you ask in wonder—"How can we answer Him?" The answer is clear—"By bringing Jesus to remembrance." Our Lord Jesus Christ is man's complete answer to God.

Divine justice demands death as the penalty of sin—behold the Son of God taken down from the cross because He was surely dead, wrapped in the clothes of the grave and laid in Joseph's tomb. God's justice demands suffering, demands that the sinner be abandoned of God. See yonder cross and hear the cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Great God, You have, in Jesus, all the suffering Your justice can ask, even to death itself. God's holiness righteously demands a life of obedience—man cannot be right before God unless he renders perfect obedience to the law. Behold our answer, we bring a perfect Savior's active and passive obedience and lay it down at Jehovah's feet—what more can He ask for? He requires a perfect heart and an unblemished person, and He cannot accept less than a perfect manhood. We bring the Father His Only-Begotten, the Son of Man, our Brother. And here is our answer—there is the perfect Man, the unfallen Head of the race. Oh, never try to reply to

God with any other answer than this. Whatever He asks of you, bring Him your Savior. He cannot ask for more. You bring before Him that which fully contents Him, for He Himself has said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Let your answer then to the justice of God be Christ.

But I said that Christ fulfilled the other purpose. He is God's answer to us. What have you to ask of God this morning? Are you so far away from Him that you inquire, "How can I be saved?" No answer comes out of the excellent glory except Christ on the cross—that is God's answer—believe in Him and live. By those wounds, by that bloody sweat, by that sacrificial death you must be saved. Look you there! Do you say unto the Lord, "I have trusted Christ, but am I secure of salvation?" No answer comes but Christ risen from the dead to die no more. Death has no more dominion over Him, and He has said, "Because I live, you shall live also." The risen Christ is the Lord's assurance of our safety for eternity. Do you ask the Lord, "How much do You love me?" You have asked a large question, but there is a large answer for you. He gives His Son—behold what manner of love is here! Do you inquire, "Lord, what will You give me?" His Son is the answer to that question also. Behold these lines written on His bleeding person, "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?" Would you need more? Do you say, "What sign do You show that all these things are so?" He gives you Christ in heaven. Yes, if you ask, "Lord, what shall Your servant be when You have completed Your work of grace upon me?" He points you to Jesus in glory, for you shall be like Him. If you ask what is to be your destiny in the future, He shows you Christ coming a second time without a sin-offering unto salvation. Dear friend, you can ask nothing of your God, but what He gives you at once a reply in Jesus. Oh what blessed talk is that when the Christian's heart says Jesus, and the Christian's God says Jesus, and how sweet it is when we come to Jesus and rest in Him and God is in Jesus and makes Him His rest forever. Thus do believers and their God rest together in the same Beloved One. May the Lord add His blessing to our meditation and make this kind of communion common among us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Psalm 84, and 85.
HYMN FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
84 (SONG III), 95 (SONG III), 782.

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THE OLD MAN'S SERMON
NO. 1256

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 26, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"O God, You have taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared Your wondrous works. Now, also, when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not, until I have showed Your strength unto this generation, and Your power to everyone that is to come."
Psalm 71:17, 18.

I EXPECT during the present week to have the pleasure of preaching at Kettering, to celebrate the centenary of the ministry in that place of Mr. Toller and his father. My esteemed friend Mr. Toller has for about 55 years proclaimed the gospel of the grace of God to the same people, and with the 45 years of his father's previous pastorate the century is completed. Having this very pleasant task before me, I have been led to consider the subject of old age and especially the old age of believers, and have concluded that "*The reminiscences of an old man*" would furnish us a suitable topic for this morning's discourse. I was the more led to choose the subject because on Sabbath week the children and young people will have a claim upon the preacher, since that day has been selected by the Sunday School Union for special prayer. To balance accounts, let us give this morning's service to our grave and reverend seniors.

David has here spoken as an aged man and what he has said has been echoed by thousands of venerable believers. His experience of the past, his prayer for the present, and his aspiration for the future have all occurred to others who are his equals in years, and those of us who are in middle life will before long be glad to say, "Amen" thereto. "O God, You have taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared Your wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not." David, in this passage, may be regarded as the model of an aged believer converted in early life. And we feel quite safe in taking all his expressions and putting them into the mouths of veteran soldiers of the cross.

I. The first thing we shall dwell upon this morning will be HIS SCHOLARSHIP, *or a good beginning*. "O God, You have taught me from my youth." *The psalmist was an instructed believer*. He had not merely been saved, but taught—conversion had led to instruction. I call the attention of all young Christians to this. How desirable it is, not merely that you should be forgiven your sins and justified by faith in Christ Jesus, and that your hearts should be renewed by the operations of the Holy Spirit, but that you should go to school to Jesus and take His yoke upon you and learn of Him. Do you not know that this is the good part

which Mary chose, and which the Lord declared should not be taken away from her? She chose to sit at His feet to learn of Him. Do not suppose that to be saved from hell is everything. You need also to be instructed in righteousness. If you seek to know the Lord more and more, it will save you from a thousand snares, cause you to grow in divine grace, and enable you to be useful. That will be a fruitful old age which was preceded by an instructed youth. We ought to know the truth and understand it, for if we do not we shall always be weak in the faith. That David was exceedingly well instructed is clear from his Psalms which contain a mine of doctrine and a wealth of experience never surpassed even by other inspired writings. If one had no other book than the Psalms to study, he might, by the blessing of God's Spirit, become one of the wisest of men. Aim, then, my brethren to be disciples now, that in your old age you may look back with joy on the days spent in heavenly learning.

All his instruction the psalmist traced to his God. "O God, *You* have taught me." He had entered Christ's College as a scholar. Most wisely had he chosen to learn of Him who has infinite wisdom to impart and divine skill in communicating it. The Lord not only endeavors to teach, but He does so. He knows how to make His children learn, for He speaks to the heart and teaches us to profit. "O God, You have taught me." What a blessed thing it is when we are fully convinced by the Holy Spirit that to learn anything aright we must be taught of God. Too many appear to fancy that everything they need to know they can discover for themselves. They think they can work it out by their own thoughts, or at any rate, the profound learning of their favorite authors will carry them through. My brother, you who have grown grey in your Master's service, I am sure you have learned to mistrust your own understanding and are glad to receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child. You know by experience that all you have ever learned apart from God has been a lesson of sorrow or of folly. You have obtained no true light except from the great Father of lights. No heavenly truths are learned aright till by the Holy Spirit they are burnt into the soul. Blessed are those who have gone to school to such a Master—they shall be among the wise who shall shine as the brightness of the firmament.

The Lord had taught David, in part, by His Word, for we find David delighting in the Scriptures and meditating in them both day and night. He taught him also by His ministers. He gathered no little instruction from Samuel and he learned some pointed lessons from Nathan, while Gad, the king's seer, no doubt, also ministered to his building up. God's children are willing to be taught by God's servants. He had also been instructed by the Holy Spirit—many a precious truth had been communicated to him in the quiet of the sheep walks, or in the solitary caverns of the hills—and even when he had become a king he was awakened in the night watches that he might hear the voice of the Lord his God. Moreover, the Lord taught him by providence. He learned much from his shepherd's crook, much from his sling and stone, much from the hatred of

Saul, much from the love of Jonathan. He must have learned much afterwards of his own heart from his own trials, follies, and sins. And he must have seen much of man's worthlessness from the ingratitude of Absalom, the treachery of Ahithophel, the brutality of Joab, and the blasphemy of Shimei. His whole life was a source of education. Whether he stood on the hill Mizar or traversed the valley of Baca, whether he exulted in green pastures or sunk in the deeps where all God's waves and billows went over him, whether he sang a hallelujah or chanted a *miserere*, everything was training him for a yet nobler existence. Therefore he could say to the Most High, "*You* have taught me." O beloved Christian friends, in looking back can you not see how everything has been instructive to you when you have been willing to learn? What a school have some of us passed through—a school of trial and a school of love. We have sat on the hard floor of discipline, we have felt the rod of correction, and on the other hand, our eyes have sparkled with delight as we have studied the illuminated book of fellowship and peered into the secrets of the Lord which is with them that fear Him. In us has been fulfilled that ancient covenant promise, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord."

David also had the privilege of beginning early. "O God, You have taught me *from my youth*." I was a scholar in Your infant class. I was put to You to learn my letters, and when I learned to spell out Your name as my Savior and Father, it was Your grace which taught it to me. All true learning begins at Christ's feet and it is well to be there in our youth. If you would be a good scholar, you must be a young scholar. David felt that he needed to be instructed of God from his youth, for in one of his psalms he says, "Remember not the sins of my youth, and my former transgressions." So that even pious David had sins of his youth to mourn over and therefore needed as well as others to learn the way of holiness when young. The dire necessity which the foolishness of nature has laid upon us from our earliest days is met by early grace. My aged brethren, I would urge you at this moment to bless the Lord for the grace which in early days saved many of you from falling into grievous sin.

The sin which the psalmist mourned over, he was enabled by divine teaching to master. He says himself, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Your Word," and so David had done, and hence his early life was marked by great purity and simplicity of character, because he had so well been taught of God. Especially had he been taught to *trust* his God, for in the fifth verse of this psalm he says, "You are my hope, O Lord God, You are my trust from my youth." And being so taught he had practically proved his faith, for while he was yet in his youth he smote the uncircumcised Philistine, and in the name of God delivered Israel. Blessed is that young man who practically shows by daring deeds that he is a disciple of Jesus. Blessed is that old man who in looking back confesses that he needed teaching from his youth up, but also rejoices that he received instruction from the Lord, and was led into the way of righteousness.

Further, notice David tells us *he kept to his studies*. He says, "O God, You have taught me *from* my youth," which implies that God had continued to teach him and so indeed He had. The learner had not sought another school, nor had the Master refused His pupil. Some make slight progress because they seem to begin well but afterwards turn aside to folly. They profess to be taught of God at one time, but they grow weary of the plain gospel of Jesus and resort to heresy-mongers and inventors of strange doctrines. Good is it for the heart to be established in the truth and to yield itself to no teacher but the Lord. Venerable brother, I hope you can say, "O God, You have taught me from my youth. I have not bowed my soul to every wind of doctrine and made myself as the bulrush, which yields to every passing breath of air. But I have been steadfast, unmovable, holding fast the Word of truth."

It is equally clear that *he was still learning*. The oldest saint still goes to school to the Lord Jesus. Oh, how little we know when we know most. The wisest saints are those who most readily confess their folly. The man who knows everything is the man who knows nothing. The man who cannot learn any more is the man who has never learned anything aright. To know Christ and the power of His resurrection creates an insatiable thirst after a still closer acquaintance with Him. Our eager desire is yet more fully "to know Him."

I half wish that I could leave the pulpit and that some venerable brother could come forward and tell you how God began with him, and repeat the first lessons that he learned. I should like to hear him tell how God has had patience with him and has taught him still—how sometimes he has had to smart under the rod before he could be made to learn at all—and yet the Lord has been gentle with him. I should like "such a one as Paul the aged" to tell you how by everything that has happened, bad and good, bright and dark, his education has been carried on. And I should like him to tell you how glad he is to continue to be a learner, though now so far advanced in life. The best instructed of our elder brethren are those who most earnestly cry, "What I know not, teach me," and "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law." Though my venerable friend has earned unto himself a good degree, he still keeps to his old book and his old Master. Though now able to teach others also he is none the less a disciple, sitting at the feet of Jesus. Yes, he is all the more teachable because of what he already knows.

Thus, brethren, we have seen that the model of aged believers is an instructed saint who owes all he knows to divine teaching, who began to learn early, and has persevered in his sacred studies even to this day—

"'Twas Yours, O Lord, to train and try
My spirit from my youth;
And to this hour I glorify
The wonders of Your truth."

II. Secondly, pass on to consider HIS OCCUPATION. His scholarship was a good beginning, his occupation was *a good continuance*—"Hitherto have I declared Your wondrous works." This was David's chief employment. It is true he had other work to do, for he was at first a shepherd.

He then became a royal harper, afterwards grew into a warrior, and at last climbed to a throne. Still, his life's main bent and objective was to magnify the Lord by declaring His wondrous works. You and I, brethren, have each one his calling, and if it is a lawful calling, let us abide in it and let us not dream that it would honor God for us to leave our daily occupations upon pretense of serving Him in a more spiritual way by living upon other people. Still, our earthly vocation is but the shell of our heavenly calling which is the kernel of our life's pursuit. Our temporal business must be subservient to our spiritual business and we must declare the glory of God in some way or other. David magnified the Lord by his Psalms. How sweetly has he therein declared God's ways of mercy and of faithfulness! He glorified God by his life, especially by those heroic deeds which made all Israel know the mighty works which God could do by a feeble but trustful man. He no doubt often declared the wondrous works of God in private conversation with believers and unbelievers by narrating his personal experience of the Lord's mercies. You and I, if we have been to God's school, must follow the same occupation. Some of us can preach. Let us be diligent in it. Others of you teach in the Sunday school—I beseech you put your whole hearts into that blessed work. All of you can, by written letters or private conversation, and especially by consistent lives, declare the wondrous works of God and make men know the glories of the God of grace. Let us be eager in this sacred work. Men do not care to know their God, but we must not allow them to be ignorant. Tell them of that love of His against which they daily offend and of His readiness to forgive their provocations. Publish and proclaim salvation by grace. It is sweet in old age to remember that you did this.

Notice here, dear friends that *David had chosen a divine subject.* "Hitherto have I declared Your wondrous works." *God's* works he had declared, not man's. He had not talked of what man could do or had done. Note verse sixteen—"I will make mention of Your righteousness, even of Yours only." Neither the virtues of saints, nor the prerogatives of priests, nor the infallibility of pontiffs, nor anything of the sort had degraded the psalmist's lips. Those lips had reserved themselves for the glory of God alone. "My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long."

We ought to speak of what God has done in creation, providence, and grace—and especially should we point out the marvelous nature of those works—for there is a wonder about them all. Truly, brethren, here is a great subject for us—the wonders of electing love, the wonders of redeeming grace, the wonders of the Holy Spirit's converting power, the wonders of sanctification, the wonders of sin conquered and of grace implanted. Such wonders never cease. Wonders of grace belong to God and it should be your business and mine, in the spirit of holy reverence, to tell others what God has done, that we may set them wondering and adoring, too. David had a blessed subject, a subject of which the main point was the blending of righteousness with salvation. Did you notice the 15th verse, "My mouth shall show forth Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day"? That is the great Christian doctrine—*medulla theo-*

logiae, the very pith and marrow of theology—the atonement in which grace and justice unite in the sacrifice of Jesus. O beloved, I could wish to have no other subject to speak upon, and to have my tongue touched with a live coal from off the altar to preach of only substitution. I desire to speak of it first and foremost and beyond all else. I would show forth daily how God is just and yet the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. How He smites for sin and yet smites not the sinner; how He is severe, relaxing none of the penalty, and yet laying none of the penalty upon the guilty because The Guiltless One has borne it all. Make it, dear friends, the occupation of your lives is to instruct men in this saving truth. Teach them this if nothing else. If there are some doctrines you cannot understand, yet get a grip of this one. If some are too high for you, yet let this be your daily theme—Christ crucified—at whose cross righteousness and peace have kissed each other. This was David's occupation. My aged brethren in Christ, this has been your occupation also, and you do not regret it. You only wish you had been more diligent in it.

Now notice that while David's subject was divine, it had also been *uniform*. He says, "*Hitherto* have I declared Your wondrous works." It is a sad thing when a good man turns aside to error, even if it is but for a little season. Some ministers have preached terribly. I should think they themselves do not know what they have taught, for they have gone from one line of thought to another and contradicted themselves over and over again. Beware of being men given to change, ready to catch every new disease. I confess I feel an admiration for a man who can say, "What I taught in my youth, I teach in my old age. That which was my hope and confidence when first the Spirit of God opened my mouth—that and no other—is my hope and confidence still." As men grow in years, they ought to think more deeply, to understand more clearly, and to speak with greater confidence. And it is their wisdom to correct many errors of detail which occurred through the immaturity of their early days. But still, it is a great thing to hold fundamental truths from the very first. There are not two Christs or two gospels—if there is another gospel it is not another, but there are some that trouble us. Oh, my brother, if the Lord has taught you from your youth, abide in that which you have learned—hold to it now that your hair is grey. Let us see that "the Old Guard dies but never surrenders." Even we, who are younger than you are, have resolved to abide in the grand old truths. Our banner was nailed to the mast long ago. Surely the veterans will say the same. All my salvation and all my desire are centered in the covenant of grace and the gospel of redemption by the blood of Jesus. As for novelties of doctrine, I have one answer for them all—

"Should all the forms which men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart."

That is good word of permanence—*hitherto;* "Hitherto have I declared Your wondrous works." Hitherto also have our aged fathers come, holding still the things most surely believed among us.

But, dear friends, notice that *the style which David used was very commendable*. "Hitherto have I *declared*," says he. Now by declaration I understand something positive, plain, and personal. David's teaching about his God had not been with an "if," or a "but," or a "perhaps," but it had been, "Thus and thus, says the Lord." He had declared the truth openly. His teaching had not been misty and foggy so that his people could make what they liked out of it according to their tastes. Neither had it been mystical, metaphysical, transcendental, and philosophic—he had declared it, cleared it, explained it, and brought it into prominent notice—so that he who ran might read it. He had also declared it as known to himself and certified by his own experience. It is a blessed thing to give a personal tinge to our testimony by saying, "Thus and thus have I experienced and so has the Lord dealt with me." Herein will lie much of the interest of our testimony. Dear brethren, you who have attained to a ripe old age, I trust you are able in looking back to say, "Yes, I have spoken honestly for God from my inmost heart, and therefore I have spoken with decision, proving by my personal experience the truth of the divine promises. God has always been true to me and though some may think me an egotist I can bear the censure, for I am unable to restrain myself from uttering my grateful acknowledgments. Surely if I did not speak, the stones would cry out. I must proclaim the faithfulness of the living God."

David's style had in it very much of holy awe and loving devotion, for he says, "Your *wondrous* works," which shows that he himself had wondered while he spoke. I like to hear a good man talk of God's love, feeling it to be too deep for him, speaking of it with tears, as though it overcame him—telling his tale as though it were more marvelous to him than he could make it appear to his hearers. David had done his work in the spirit of adoring wonder and grateful love, for, my brethren, he had always before him this one objective—to make God great in men's thoughts. May I ask you who are getting on in years, are you making this your one occupation? And if you happen to be teachers or preachers, do you teach the salvation of God with the sole aim of glorifying God? Oh, it must come to this, for all divine service which is not rendered with this motive is unacceptable and idle work. If we could preach with the tongues of men and of angels so as to surpass Apollos or if our objective were to shine in the eyes of men, our preaching would be as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. If there is any mixture in the motive, dead flies are in the ointment of the apothecary and it gives forth an ill savor. But if this is our one sole desire, to glorify God by making men see what a great and blessed God He is, our labor will be as the incense upon the golden altar. Upon such service we shall be able to look back in our old age with thankfulness. How is it with you, my brother, my sister, in reviewing the past? And how are matters with you who are in the prime of your strength—are you about your Father's business and living for God in all that you do? Oh, then, happy shall you be when grey hairs shall adorn your heads with a crown of glory, for the silver light shall not rest on

your heads only, but shall cast its sheen of gladness upon your hearts also, as you remember that hitherto you have declared His wondrous works.

III. Thus I pass on to the third thing in the text, namely, HIS PRAYER, which was *a good omen—"Now, also, when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not."* What a plaintive prayer it is. It shows you, brethren, that David was not ashamed of *his former reliance*.

He felt that he should not have come so far if God had not led him. He saw his absolute dependence upon God in the past, the necessity which had always existed for his entire reliance on the divine omnipotence. I hope that from our youth we have known the necessity of dependence upon God, but I am certain that dependence is a growing feeling. Growing Christians think themselves nothing. Full-grown Christians think themselves less than nothing. Good men are like ships—the fuller they are, the lower they sink in the stream. The more grace a man has, the more he complains of his want of grace. Grace is not a kind of food which creates a sense of fullness, but as I have heard of some meats that you can eat till you are hungry, so it is with grace—the more you receive the more you long for. David knew the secret springs from which all his blessings had flowed and he pleads with the Lord never to stop the divine fountain of all-sufficiency, or he must faint and die.

This proves, dear friends that David did not imagine that past grace could suffice for the present. Past experience is like the old manna; it breeds worms and stinks if it is relied upon. The moment a man begins to pride himself on the grace he used to have six years ago, you may depend upon it, he has very little now. We need new grace every day. The presence of God with me yesterday will not suffice for the present moment—I must have grace now. David acknowledged his *present dependence*, and it was wise to do so. Men always stumble when they try to walk with their eyes turned behind them. It is very remarkable that all the falls, as far as I remember, recorded in Scripture, are those of old men. This should be a great warning to us who think we are getting wise and experienced. Lot and Judah and Eli and Solomon and Asa were all advanced in years when they were found faulty before the Lord. Cool passions are no guarantees against fiery sins, unless grace has cooled them rather than the decay of nature. There was great need for David to say, "O God, forsake me not," and his own case proved it. I have heard say by those who drive much, that horses more often fall at the bottom of the hill than anywhere else. Where the driver thinks he needs not hold them up any longer, down they go. And thus many men have borne temptation bravely for years—and just when the trial was over and they reckoned that they were safe—they turned aside to crooked ways and grieved the Lord. You are greatly surprised aren't you? You would have believed it of anybody sooner than of them, but so it is. Take this, then, as a caution, lest we spoil a lifelong reputation by one wretched act of sin. My very heart cries, "O God, forsake me not."

The psalmist saw that many enemies were watching him and therefore he pleaded, "Forsake me not." He had many temptations to grow weary in his Master's service and he prayed, "Forsake me not." He felt also the natural decay of his physical force and he cried, "My strength fails," and therefore he pleaded, "Forsake me not."—

"With years oppressed, with sorrows worn,
Dejected, harassed, sick, forlorn,
To You, O God, I pray;
To You my withered hands arise,
To You I lift these failing eyes;
Oh, cast me not away!"

The psalmist by this prayer confessed *his undeservingness*. He felt that for his sins God might well leave him. Hence that prayer in the 51st Psalm, "Cast me not away from Your presence; take not Your Holy Spirit from me." But he humbly resolved not to be deserted. He could not bear it. He held his God with eagerness and cried in agony, "O God, forsake me not." His heart was desperately set upon holding to his one hope and consolation and so he pleaded as one who pleads for life itself.

You now have the prayer before you—what do you think, brethren—will the Lord answer it? You who are feeling your strength fail through old age have been praying, "O God, forsake me not." What do you think, will the Lord answer your prayer? Yes, that He will! It is not possible for Him to do otherwise. Do you think it is like our Lord to leave a man because he is growing old? Would any of us do it? Son, would you cast off your father because he totters about the house? Brother, would you leave your elder brother because he is now aged and infirm? Do we, any of us, as long as we have human hearts in our bosom, pitilessly desert the aged? Oh no. And God is far better than we are. He will not despise His worn-out servants. The feeble moanings of the most afflicted and infirm are heard by Him, not with weariness, but with pity. Do you think the Lord will turn off His old servants? Would you do so? Among men it is common enough to leave poor old people to shift for themselves. The soldier who has spent the prime of his life in his country's service has been left to beg by the roadside, or to die of starvation. Even the saviors of a nation have been allowed in their old age to pine in penury. How often have kings and princes cast off their most faithful servants and left them exposed to their enemies! When time has wrinkled the handsome face and bowed the erect figure, the old man has no longer found a place in the throng of courtiers. But the Lord deals not so. The King of kings casts not off His veteran soldiers, nor His old courtiers. He indulges them with peculiar favors. We have a proverb that old wine and old friends are best and truly we need not look far to see that the oldest saints are frequently the best esteemed by the Lord. He did not forsake Abraham when he was well on in years, nor Isaac when he was blind, nor Jacob when he worshipped upon the top of his staff.

Who among us would turn off an old servant? Some skinflints who have no sense of shame might do so, but they are a disgrace to their kind. I know my Lord and Master will never act as they do, for He is love,

and His mercy endures forever. If He has blessed us in youth and middle age, He will not change His ways and desert us in our declining days. No, blessed be His name, at eventide it will be light and He will show Himself more tender than ever to us, for He has said, "Even to old age I am He, and even to hoary hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry, and will deliver you."

No, my brethren, Jesus will not forget his old Barzillais, nor though like Peter others should gird us and take us where we would not, He will not turn away His face from us, but will love us to the end.

Why, brethren, if the Lord had meant to cast us off, would He not have done so long ago? If He needed occasion for discharging us from His service, has He not had plenty? My Lord has had reason enough to send me packing hundreds of times, if He had willed to do so. He has not waited all these years to pick a quarrel with you at the last, I am sure, for He might have justly removed you from His household years ago. If He had meant to destroy you, would He have shown you such things as He has done? If He meant to leave you, would He not have left you in your troubles 20 years ago? He has spent so much patience and pains and trouble over you that He surely means to go through with it. Why should He not? Has He begun to build and is He not able to finish? Trembling friend, remember that your vessel has been steered across the ocean of life for 70 years and surely you can trust the Lord to pilot you for the few years which remain. Did you say that you are nearly 80 and do you still doubt your God? How long do you expect to live? Another 10 years? Cannot you trust Him for that? Why, you will not be here so long as that, in all probability, and since the Lord has been good to you so long, why do you doubt now? Oh, do not so. It is almost Saturday night, the week's work is nearly done and you will soon enjoy the everlasting Sabbath—can you not rely upon your God till the day breaks and the shadows flee away? "Ah," you say, "you are only a young man, it is very well for you to talk." I know it. I know it. And yet I believe that when I grow old I shall be able to talk as I do now and even more confidently, for I trust I shall then be able to say, "He who taught me from my youth and kept me to this day, will not now let me go." Oh, my brethren, though you cried in prayer, "O God, forsake me not," do not sink so low as to imagine that He can forsake you, for that were to mistrust His royal Word, in which He said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

IV. Our last point is this, here is HIS WISH, or *a good ending*. "Forsake me not *until I have showed Your strength unto this generation and Your power to everyone that is to come*." He had spent a lifetime in declaring God's gospel, but he wanted to do it once more. Aged saints are reluctant to cease from active service. Many of them are like old John Newton, who, when he was too feeble to walk up the pulpit stairs of St. Mary Woolnoth Parish, was carried up to his place and preached on. His friends said, "Really, Mr. Newton, you are so feeble, you ought to quit." And he said, "What? Shall the old African blasphemer ever leave off preaching the grace of his Master as long as there is breath in his body?

No, never." It is harder work to leave off than to go on, for the love of Christ constrains us still, and burns with young flames in an aged heart. So here the good man pines to show forth, once more God's strength. I think I hear somebody say to the aged man, "You are very unfit to show forth God's strength, for by reason of years your strength is failing." But such a speech would be foolish, for the very man to show forth the Lord's strength is the man who has none of his own. It is no small thing to be in a condition to need great help, and so to be fitted to receive it, and qualified to illustrate what great things divine power can accomplish. My aged friend, your weakness will serve as a foil to set forth the brightness of divine strength. The "old man eloquent," feels that if he could bear one more testimony, everybody would know it was not the strength of his natural spirit or his fine juvenile constitution which upheld him. If he spoke up for his Maker, all men would say, "That feeble old man who testified so bravely for his Lord is himself the best of all testimonies to the power of divine grace, for we see how it strengthens him."

Moreover, he thought that if he witnessed for his Lord the young people would note the strength of divine grace which could last out so many years—they would see that many waters could not quench love, neither could the floods drown it. They would see the strength of God's pardoning mercy in blotting out his sins so long and the power of God's faithfulness in remaining true to His servant, even to the end. Because of all this he eagerly desired to bear one more testimony.

And, do you notice the congregation he wished to address? He would testify to the generation that was growing up around him. He wished to make known God's power to his immediate neighbors and to their children, so that the light might be handed on to other generations. This should be on the mind of all who are going off the stage of action—they should think of those who are to come after them. They should pray for them and help them. The aged man's thoughts should be fixed upon the spiritual legacies which he will leave and as good old Jacob gathered up his feet in the bed and then divided his blessing among his sons, so should the venerable believer distribute benedictions. Your work is almost done, it only remains to leave behind you a monument by which you may be remembered. Marble and brass will perish, but the truth will remain. Set up a memorial of faithful testimony. Not much longer will you mingle with the sons of men. Your seat will be empty and the place which knows you today will know you no more. Hand on, then, the blessed treasure of the gospel. You die, but the cause of God must not. Speak now, so that when you are gone it may be said of you, "He, being dead, yet speaks." Call your children and your grandchildren together and tell them what a good God you have served. Or, if you have no such dear ones, speak to your neighbors and your friends, or write it down that other eyes may read it when yours are glazed in death. Reach out your hands to the ages yet to come and present them with the pearl of great price. Pray God to enable you to set your mark upon the coming generation and then set about winning youth to Jesus by a cheerful,

bold, unhesitating witness to His love and power. Willing to go, we all ought to be, but we ought scarcely to desire departure till we have seen the interests of the cause of God secured for coming time. If there is one more soul to be saved, one more heart to be comforted, one more jewel to be gathered for the Redeemer's crown, you will say, dear friend, I am sure, "Let me wait till my full day's work is done."—

"Happy if with my last breath
I may but lisp Your name,
Preach You to all, and say in death,
'Behold, behold the Lamb!'"

With this last practical thought I send away my venerable brethren, asking them to take care that their eventide shall be made to glow with the special light of usefulness by their abundant witnessing. I would urge the Lord's veterans to yet more valorous deeds. If, like David, you have slain the lion and the bear and the Philistine when you were young, up, man, and do another deed of daring, for the Lord lives still, and His people have need of you. Though your joints are rather rusty and your limbs can hardly bear you to the battlefield, yet limp to the conflict, for the lame take the prey. He who helped you when you were but a youth and ruddy will help you now though you are old and infirm—and who knows what you may do yet! One of the finest paintings I ever saw to move one's soul was the picture of old Dandolo, the Doge of Venice, leading the way in an attack at sea upon the enemies of the Republic. He was far past the usual age of man and blind—yet, when the efforts of others failed to save his country, he became the leader—and was the first to board the ships of the enemy. The young men felt that they could not hold back when they saw the heroic conduct of the blind, grey-bearded man. His brave example seemed to say, "Soldiers of Venice, will you ever turn your backs?" And the response was worthy of the challenge. Oh, my honored brethren, deserving reverence for your years, show us your metal. Let the young ones see how victories are won. Quit yourselves like men and let us see how he who is washed in the blood of Jesus would not hesitate to shed his own blood in the Redeemer's cause. Your zeal will stimulate us, your courage nerve us, and we, too, will be valiant for the Lord God of Israel. So may God's Spirit work in you and in us. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 71.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
71 (SONG I), 71 (SONG II), 733.

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A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 3, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, you would love Me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me."
John 8:42.

THE order of salvation is, first, we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and we obtain a change of heart as His gift, and then that renewed heart loves the Lord Jesus in whom it has believed. Faith leads the train of divine graces, not love. It would not be preaching the gospel to say to men, "Love Christ." Love to Jesus is an after growth. To preach the gospel is to cry, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." The faith which saves is not, however, a mere credence of facts in which men feel no interest. It is a hearty trustfulness in Jesus for blessings of which we feel the need and it is, in every case, an operative faith—a faith which works—and works by love. If you have indeed believed in the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of your soul, then you are a child of God, for, "to as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." If you are a son of God, you love your Father. And it is a rule that "he that loves Him that begat loves Him also that is begotten of Him." So that true faith is the evidence of our sonship and sonship with God is attended with love—which love to the Father leads to the love of His Son, Jesus Christ. By this then shall you judge your faith this day, whether it is the faith of God's elect or not. If it is a cold assent of the understanding, it will not save you. But if it is a warm allegiance of the heart, then it is indeed the faith which is of the operation of the Spirit of God.

I purpose this morning to speak about our love to Christ. It may help you if I give you the outline, first, of what I have to say. *Love to Christ is in itself essential.* Secondly, *love to Christ is the test of sonship*, as the text informs us. And therefore, thirdly, *love to Christ is a test which it is important for us to apply to ourselves at this time.*

I. LOVE TO CHRIST IS IN ITSELF ESSENTIAL. There are some graces in which a man may be deficient and though he may be the worse for that deficiency, still he may be a Christian. But love to Jesus is an essential grace, a grace of the heart, lying near the vitals of piety, so that the lack of it is fatal. You must love Jesus Christ if you are indeed alive unto God.

Now observe, first, that *the absence of love to Christ is the loss of one of the greatest of spiritual pleasure*s. We ought to pity, as well as to blame the man who does not love Jesus Christ. Alas, poor soul, into what a state has he fallen that he should not be able to love Him who is "alto-

gether lovely," nor to admire Him who is the "Chief among ten thousand"? I met not long ago with a lady who had lost her taste and smell—a somewhat singular affliction. The fairest rose in the world cannot salute her nostrils with its pleasant perfume. The daintiest flavor that ever delighted men's palate has no charms for her. She is dead to those pleasures and I could not but sympathize with her in her loss. Yet, after all, this loss of pleasurable sensation is a trifle—it will only last for a few years—and when this brief life is over she will possess every desirable faculty; but what a terrible thing to be unable to perceive the fragrance of the name of Jesus, which is as ointment poured forth. What sorrow is yours if you are unable to taste the sweet flavor of the bread of heaven, or the richness of that wine on the lees well refined which makes the saints of God so glad. I had rather be blind, deaf and dumb and lose my taste and smell, than not love Christ. To be unable to appreciate HIM is the worst of disabilities, the most serious of calamities. It is not the loss of a single spiritual faculty, but it proves the death of the soul. It evidences the absence of all that can make existence worth the having, for he that has not the Son has not life—and the wrath of God abides on him.

The absence of the love of Christ in the soul, again, is *a sign of very grievous degradation*. It is the mark of the animal that it cannot enter into intellectual pursuits. You may put before it the most delightful of studies, but the swine can never realize mental pleasure. It would be its degradation that it cannot, if indeed it had been originally intended for such pursuits. Man was made for the highest and most elevated enjoyment, the enjoyment of the presence of God and the admiration of His infinite perfections. And when he loses this power to appreciate, admire, and love his God, he sinks from his high calling to a level with the brutes. If an angel could be lowered into a dog and yet could worship God and love Christ, he would scarcely have fallen at all, compared with the fatal descent of a man who is plunged into such a stupor of evil that he cannot perceive the loveliness of the Lord Jesus Christ. We greatly pity those poor creatures of our own race who are unable to reason, but what shall we think of those who cannot love, or rather cannot love where love should center? To the poor idiot you may read the most charming lines of Milton, but he cannot rise to a sense of sublimity. You may afterwards pour into his ears the pleasing sweetnesses of Wordsworth, or the fascinating allegories of Bunyan, but he smiles at you vacantly and you perceive that his imbecile mind is incapable of comprehension. Sad it is that a human being should come down to this—and yet not to love the Lord Jesus reveals a moral and spiritual imbecility far worse than mere mental incapacity—because it is willful and involves a crime of the heart. Generally the non-appreciation of goodness is attended with an appetite for evil and therefore the ill is doubled. It was a great degradation for the king of Babylon when he left the diet of the royal table to roam the fields with the cattle and to eat grass like the oxen. It was not merely that his madness drove him from man, but it herded him with brutes. It not only took away his relish for bread but gave him a taste for

grass. It was a strange madness which drove a king to graze with beasts, but not more strange than that which makes men feed upon the ashes of this world's sinful pleasures and turn aside from that which is truly bread. Oh, it is a worse insanity than that which is secluded within the walls of yonder Bedlam, this madness which can discover beauty in the painted face of the Jezebel of sin and is not charmed by the comeliness of Him whose brightness is the light of heaven. Yet, O you saints of God, remember you were such not long ago. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." "We hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." Our foolish heart was darkened and we saw not Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness. Blessed be the grace which has given us power to appreciate our Savior. May it increase more and more. Let us pity, as well as blame, those who now are given over to the fast closing of their eyes that they cannot see my Lord, and the shutting of their ears that they cannot hear the music of His voice, and the deadening of their hearts that they cannot perceive the charms of His love. Alas for the degradation which is manifested in inability to love Jesus!—

"That Holy One,
Who came to earth for thee—
O basest thing beneath the sun,
That He, by any mortal one,
Forgotten ever should be."

To be without love to Christ is a clear proof that the whole of our manhood is out of order. It would be impossible for us to be indifferent to the excellences of Jesus if we were as God created us. And inasmuch as we do not love Him till grace renews us, this proves how altogether diseased human nature has become. The understanding, were it well balanced, would judge that Christ is over all and before all and give to Him the preeminence in everything. But, being biased and thrown out of gear, the judgement puts Christ in the lowest place and pays its homage to the world, the flesh, or the devil, rather than to the King of kings. The mind must be altogether debased and robbed of all nobility not to love one whose self-denying benevolence commands the admiring gratitude of all renewed spirits. Did our Lord descend from heaven to earth to save His enemies? Being found on earth in fashion as a man, did He endure every insult and every misery with the sole objective of blessing others? And did He, at last, endure pangs never to be described—and all for the sake of worthless man? Then not to love such a mirror of generous affection is to be mean in spirit and base at heart. Gratitude is no very stupendous virtue, but it is necessary to deliver us from being guilty of the meanest of all the vices, for ingratitude may justly be so described. Man despising Christ who died for man is a sight enough to make an angel mourn. Yes, seraphs might weep with wonder that a creature once so fair as man should have become so foul at heart. God forgive the mind that can be so unjust, so perverted, so bewitched and besotted as to treat Jesus with indifference.

Man's affections as well as his mind must have become terribly polluted, or he would at once love Jesus. If the heart were what it should be, it

would love the good, the right, the true, the beautiful. Nothing is more good, right, true, or beautiful than Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God, and that the heart does not instinctively love Him as soon as ever it perceives Him, is clear proof that it is poisoned at its fountain. It is given unto its idols and therefore it will not love the true God. If you needed, at this time, to prove man's fallen state, you might do so by a thousand arguments, but only one would be needed. There, perhaps, was never a more powerful demonstration than that of the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, which we dare not read in public. It is a chapter which contains the most terrible of indictments against our manhood—and every word of it true. But, sirs, I take it that all the unnatural lusts into which men have fallen, though they are deeds which crimson the cheek of modesty, do not so thoroughly prove human nature to be corrupt as man's not loving Christ! A certain divine on one occasion, wishing to display his rhetoric and bring down upon himself the admiration of his hearers, exclaimed, "O virtue, you are so fair and beautiful that if you should descend upon earth, all men would love you." How greatly he erred! For virtue did descend on earth, clothed in the most attractive form, the form of pure benevolence. And yet men received her not. Virtue came in the person of our Lord Jesus, not dressed in the armor of justice, but in the silken robes of salvation, bedecked with charity and tenderness. But men refused her a habitation, denied her the common courtesies of life, and at last condemned her to die. When man crucified Jesus, he did, as much as in him lay, destroy all goodness, truth, and holiness. Then did he spit his worst venom upon everything that is lovely and of good repute, for he selected the most lovely and honored of all beings to murder by his malice. Not to love Jesus Christ is, whatever your outward character may be, dear friend, to angels and to all intelligent and purified spirits who are fit to judge, the most terrible symptom of your subjugation to a malignant spiritual disease which tyrannizes all your powers and causes you to be the opponent of your best friend.

Not to love Jesus Christ is a sure token that we have no part nor lot in His salvation, for the first effect of receiving His salvation is to love Him. You remember our Lord's parable of the two debtors. The one owed 500 pence and the other 50. They were both freely forgiven their debts because they had nothing to pay. And the question asked concerning them was, "Which of them will love him most?" Now mark, the question was not, "Which of them will love their generous benefactor?" for it is taken for granted and who will deny it, that whether forgiven 50 pence or 500, they must love him who forgave them. It is inevitable that if you have been forgiven your sin, you should love Jesus Christ. And if you do not love Him, rest assured that in His precious blood you have no portion—and His righteousness does not cover you. Solemn reflection! How essential is this excellent grace of love.

Without love to Christ it is clear that you are not saved, for *you lack the mainspring of the spiritual life*. We are often accused when telling men to believe and live, that we throw a holy life and virtuous conversation into the shade. If our objectors were candid, they would inquire whether

their accusation is true, and as the result of that inquiry they would acquit us. Either ignorance, misunderstanding or malevolence must have occasioned the utterly groundless charge, for we have explained, times without number, that when we say, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," we do not mean that the belief of an abstract proposition will save men from hell. We mean that trust in Jesus will change the heart and so save the life from sin. By salvation we mean salvation from sin, salvation from the old selfish life, salvation unto holy living. This is the salvation that we preach—salvation from evil—and this, we say, is the result of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. If these things are so, it is evident that the man who does not love Christ is not saved in this sense, for love to Christ is through the Holy Spirit made to be the mainspring and central force by which a holy life is created and sustained. "The love of Christ constrains us." This is the grand power which keeps us back from evil and impels us toward holiness. In proportion as you love Jesus, you will be holy. And in proportion as your love to Jesus becomes weak, the power of sin grows strong. And if there is no love to Jesus at all, then there are in you none of the elements which make up the Christian character—

"Knowledge, alas! 'Tis all in vain,
And all in vain our fear;
Our stubborn sins will fight and reign
If love is absent there."

Not to love Christ is a thing so dreadful that those who do love Him can hardly tell you how they tremble at the bare notion of being in such a condition. Death in the most horrible form would be preferable. Many a time have we sung, and I for one have felt it at my heart's core—

"A very wretch, Lord, I should prove,
Had I no love to Thee.
Rather than not my Savior love,
Oh, may I cease to be."

It would be much better never to have been born than not to love the Savior. It were better to go to annihilation, if such could be the case, than exist a moment without love to the Blessed One. Sometimes the saints of God have grown so warm concerning what is due to Jesus their Lord, and have felt such a horror at the sin of not loving Him, that they have pronounced a curse in God's name upon those who love not Christ. Perhaps the most terrible words in sacred Scripture are these—"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be ANATHEMA MARANATHA"—cursed when the Lord shall come. It is the major excommunication of the church. It is the most solemn word of denunciation that could have fallen from apostolic pen—and yet Paul felt that he must write it—even that Paul who could not speak of the enemies of Christ's cross without tears. My dear hearer, though you are the most moral person in the world and though you are the most orthodox professor in the church, yet if you love not the Lord Jesus Christ, "Anathema Maranatha" must be sounded in your ears, for it is proclaimed in the Word of God against you.

Who would wish to live without the love of Jesus in his soul! It is the most hideous of all conditions, for it despoils our life on earth of its highest beauty and renders heaven impossible. Until He gives you love to Christ, God Himself cannot give you heaven. You may take my words in their broadest sense, for I mean them just as they stand. I say until God Himself makes you love Christ, He cannot give you heavenly happiness, for the very essence of heaven lies in the love of that which is good and true—and the essence of all goodness and truth are in Jesus Christ. Could you be carried to the place called heaven without love to Christ, you would be utterly out of your element. The nearer presence of Christ into which you would be brought would cause you terror instead of happiness. And the delight which you would see upon the faces of ten thousand times ten thousand who love Him would only provoke you to a direr enmity and a bitterer despair. Oh, my friend, you cannot know happiness till you know Christ. Till your heart beats with love to Him, the true life can never be yours, but you are in darkness and death even now, without love to Christ, and so you must abide. It is inevitable that it should be so. So I leave the first very weighty point, praying God the Holy Spirit to press it upon the hearts of all who have no affection for the Savior. It is essential that you should love Him.

II. LOVE TO CHRIST IS THE TEST OF SONSHIP. Certain modern teachers have asserted that God is the Father of all mankind—and the doctrine of Universal Fatherhood is, I am told, exceedingly prevalent in certain quarters. That God is the Creator of all men and that in this sense men are the offspring of God, is undoubtedly true. But that unregenerate men are the sons of God is as undoubtedly false. How that flesh-pleasing doctrine can be supported, I do not know, for certainly my text gives it no assistance whatever, but rather strikes it a deadly blow. "If God were your Father, you would love Me." Consequently God is not the Father of those who do not love Christ. What do these teachers make out of the privilege of adoption? Why are men adopted, if children by nature? How is it that it is a special promise, "I will be a Father unto you and you shall be My sons and daughters"? What need of a promise of that which they have already? "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on His name." What does that mean if everybody already is a child of God? How do they interpret that God has begotten His people again by the resurrection of Christ unto a lively hope? Were we sons already? How were we heirs of wrath even as others if all men are in the family of God? They make use of an expression which bears two renderings to set up a theory which is destructive of the gospel. I leave those to defend that statement who care to do so. I believe it to be altogether untenable if we keep to the Word of God. The Fatherhood of God is to a special people, chosen from before the foundation of the world and adopted and regenerated in due time, through His grace.

It appears from the text that love to Christ is the only infallible test of our sonship towards God. Those to whom Christ spoke were by nature and descent, if any in the world were, the children of God. If any men

who did not love Christ could be the children of God, they were the Jews who stood before Him then for they were of the seed of Abraham, whom God had chosen. They had been brought up from their very childhood in the observance of ceremonies which God had ordained and they bore in their flesh the mark of the covenant. They were, moreover, the only people under heaven that worshipped one God. The Romans, the Greeks, and all others were idolaters. These Jews were worshippers of the one unseen Jehovah and very tenacious they were about it, for after the Babylonian captivity, nothing could make a Jew worship an idol. Whatever faults they might have, they certainly were not wanderers from the unity of the Godhead; *that* they held, and held most firmly. And, moreover, these people were, no doubt, made to suffer a good deal of abuse and reproach for worshipping the one, only, and invisible God. They were despised by their Roman masters. And the polite Greeks, with their poetic mythology, sneered at their strange worship which they considered to be mere atheism, since they saw no image set up. The Jew, therefore, stood out grandly as being, if any unregenerate man could be so, a son of God. And yet, as they did not love the Christ, they had not God for their father. Our Master tells them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me." And so He puts down all pretensions arising from their pedigree, from their circumcision, from their rites and ceremonies, from their broad phylacteries and bordered garments and everything else. Love to Christ is the great test of sonship to God. My dear hearer, if you do not love Christ, you are no child of God, for if you were, you would love what your Father loves; your nature, descended from God, would run in the same channel—and since He loves Christ supremely and above all things—so would you love Jesus Christ with all your heart beyond all the world. If you were a child of God, you would love Jesus, for you would see God in Jesus. He says, "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me," and inasmuch as you are a child of God, you would know your Father and perceive Him in the Son, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He is the express image of His person and the brightness of His Father's glory. And as the child loves his father, so would you love the Godhead in Jesus Christ. It would be impossible for you to do otherwise. No, not only the Godhead, but even the humanity of our Lord would win your love, for God loves holiness in man and especially in the man, Christ Jesus, and so must we. All the qualities of His human nature were brilliant with His divine holiness and therefore will be sure to command your love if you love the Father.

Every man loves that which is like himself. If you were born of God, you would love God. And Jesus Christ is God and therefore you would love Him. If you were born of God, you would be holy and true and loving and tender—and Jesus is all that—and so you would love Him. It is curious how language sometimes teaches morals. You know we have the word "like." We are said to like a thing. But the word has another meaning—we may be like to a thing. Now a man always likes that which he is like and if you are like God, you love God, to whom you are like. And being like Christ, you like Christ, to whom you are like, for like loves like,

or let me say, like likes its like. There must be love to Christ in the soul if you are like to Christ, which you are if you are a child of God.

If you are a child of God you must love Christ, because of His essential divinity. For notice in the text, "I proceeded forth and came from God." I do not understand that expression—nobody does. You have heard of Dr. Dollinger and a number of learned men meeting to lay down dogmatic declarations upon the double procession of the Holy Spirit. What a foolish task. They were engaged in defining a subject which they could not possibly understand—ants met to measure the sun, insects debating upon eternity. We cannot enter into the springs of the sea, nor can we enter into the essence of Deity, or the relationships of the blessed persons of the Trinity, the one to the other. And no man ever undertakes to do so but what he goes wrong, misled by his own presumption. If any man were to undertake to look the sun in the face by the day together he would soon become blind—the light is so excessive and mortal eyes are so dim—that blindness must follow. Jesus Christ is the Son of God by what we are accustomed to call eternal filiation, or what the text calls *proceeding* from Him and therefore because of that, being divine and proceeding from the divine Father in some mysterious sense, He is Himself to be devoutly adored. And if we are the children of God, we must love the Lord Jesus.

The text adds that we shall also love Him because of His mission. "I came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me." If we love God, we must love that which comes from God. I know when I left the village where I was first pastor and where I had loved the people much and they had loved me, I used to say if I saw even a dog which came from that parish, I should be glad to see him, for I felt a love to everything and everybody coming from that spot. It matters not how small the trifle—a little flower or a piece of leaf from the garden—you prize it, for it came from someone you revere. Ah, that little shoe of your dear babe now in heaven. Or a little piece of the handwriting of your dear mother, now with God. How dear they are! How much more should we love Christ because He came from God, and comes, not as a mere relic or memorial, but as His living, loving voice. If a child were far away in India, and he had not heard from home for some time, and he at last received a letter, how sweet it would be. It comes from Father. How pleased he is to get it. But suppose a messenger should come and say, "I came from your father"? Why, he would feel at once the deepest interest in him. Would you shut your door against your father's messenger? No, but you would say, "Come in, though it is the middle of the night, I shall always have an ear for you." Shall we not, thus, welcome Jesus?

And then, remember, while Jesus came as our Father's messenger, what a message He brought—pardon for sin, restoration from the Fall, acceptance in the Beloved and eternal life and glory. Oh, when He comes from the Father, comes for the Father, and comes with a message meant to lead us to the Father, we who are the children of God must love Him for all these reasons. It is not possible that you can be a child of God and not love the Christ whom the Father has anointed, the Messiah whom

the Father has sent, the Jesus whom the Father has made to be the Savior, the Immanuel, the God With Us, the Father's self-revealed in fullness of grace and truth.

That He came not of Himself is another reason for love. When a man lives only to serve himself, our love begins to dry up for lack of secret springs, but when we perceive that Jesus Christ did not come of Himself, but was sent of the Father—that His aims and objectives were not for Himself in any degree, but entirely for the Father and for us—our heart must go out towards Him.

III. I might thus continue, but there is no need for it to show you that you must love Jesus. And so I close with the APPLICATION. Lend me your ears and hearts a few minutes.

If it be so that love to Christ is essential and is the main test of sonship, come, brethren, do we love Him or not? Now, put the question all round. I know some will say, "Love Him? Yes, that I do." Yes, but I will still ask you, for my Lord asked Peter three times, you know, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" And I do not suppose you are better than Peter, so I must repeat the question, though you may answer it as quickly as he did, for it will not hurt you to answer aright three times—but it would hurt to answer falsely once. So let us put the question home—Do you love Jesus?

If I love Him, then I trust Him and lean on Him with all my weight.

"Ah, I do that. Blessed be His name, I know I do." Can you not speak with assurance as to that point? Tell me, then, have you any other hope besides that which springs from His dear cross and wounded side? If you have, you do not love Him. But if your trust rests wholly and alone on Him, there are the beginnings of love in you. The root of the matter is there.

If you love Him, you will keep His Word. That is the next point. He says, "If any man love Me, he will keep My Word," that is to say, he will reverence what Jesus said and endeavor to learn from His teaching. You will believe what He says and desire to know its meaning. Now, are you quite sure that you pay reverence to the words of Christ? How about your neglected Bible? How about the parts of Scripture which you have never wished to understand because you were afraid it was a little different from the articles of your church or the creed of your family? That does not look like reverence to Christ's word. My dear friend, let me put the question very pointedly. Do you want to know what Christ taught? Are you willing to believe all He reveals? Do you ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into the things of Christ? For remember, he who breaks one of the least of our Lord's commandments and teaches men so, the same shall be least in the kingdom of heaven and would you wish to be that?

Another test of love to Christ is this, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." It is not merely hearing His Word, for that the man did who built his house upon the sand. But the Lord said, "He that hears My Word and *does* it is like a man that built his house on a rock." "*Does it!*" *"Does it!"* Do you obey Christ? If you do not, you do not love Him. If the commands of Jesus are treated by you as matters of no importance, then

your heart is not with Him. The child is to love his father, but the command by which his love is to be tested is, "Children, obey your parents in all things." So with Jesus. If you love Him you will obey Him. Now search your hearts and look at your lives—are there not some points which might make you question? At any rate, I think there are many matters that should make us pray, "Lord, You know all things and therefore You know all my sins and all my failures, but still you know that I love you. Deliver me from sin and let me not grieve You any more."

Now, apply that text to your heart in another form. If you love Christ you will imitate Him. It is the nature of love to be imitative. The sincerest form of admiration is imitation. If you love Jesus, you will labor to be like Him. I am sure you will. Are you trying to be Christ-like? You perceive in yourself many things that are not in Christ—do you long to get rid of those things? And you see in Jesus Christ many excellences which you have not yet reached. Are you pressing towards them? Then I know you love Him—but if there is no imitation there is no love.

Love to Christ may also be judged of by love to His people. He who loves Jesus is sure to love all others whose hearts burn with the same flame. How is it with you? "Well," you say, "I love some of the brethren." Yes, and so do the publicans and sinners love some of them. Certain of God's people are so very sweet in their tempers and excellent in their natural dispositions that I should think the most wicked person in the world must love them. But the test is to love them for Jesus' sake, even though you cannot help seeing their mistakes and faults.

"I love the saints," says one. "At least, I love all of my denomination." That, also, is very easy, for the Sadducees loved the Sadducees and the Pharisees loved the Pharisees. But the thing is to love God's people, though you fear that they are in error upon certain points—and though you cannot agree with them in some of their views—and think they dishonor God by certain failures. The Christian loves all who are in Christ, not because of their soundness in the faith, but because of their union to Jesus. Come, then, do you love the Lord's people because they are His? "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

And, dear friend, you may judge again whether you love Christ by this—do you sympathize with His objectives? Whenever we love another, we begin to love the things which he loves. Christ desires to see this world brought to His feet. Do you wish to see Him King over the nations? He desires to gather out to Himself a chosen people. Are you seeking to bring in His wanderers? He delights to save the sons of men. Do you wish to see them saved? Do your thoughts, wishes, and desires run in a groove with those of Jesus? If so, you love Him.

Again, do you serve His cause? For that love which never leads to action is poor love. Is it love at all? The affection which can be contented without doing anything for the beloved object is so base a thing that it were a shame to degrade that golden name of love by applying it to such a miserable counterfeit. Love Jesus! And yet you have never taught a little child His name? Love Jesus! And you are an orator and yet you never

stand up to proclaim His gospel? Love Jesus? And your gold lies cankering and your silver is tarnished—and you give none of these to His work? Love Jesus! And it never costs you a night's unrest or an hour's distress of mind because His kingdom does not come? I thank God I do not understand your love and hope I never may. May God give you a better love than this—may He give you the love which works and shows itself in deeds.

If you love Jesus, you desire to be with Him and you are very glad of every opportunity of having special fellowship with Him. I know if you love Him, you will not be happy to live a day without Him. You will feel ill at ease if He is gone but for an hour. If you love Jesus, oh, how you pant for the time when you will see Him face to face. If you love Him, there are seasons when you become sick of love after Him, when you feel as if to die were a fleabite or a nothing if you might but behold His face. How often, when you have been to the house of God and heard a sermon that has carried you near to Jesus, you have been ready to say, like Simeon, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation"? When you have had to go back into the world again, you have almost felt unhappy to think you were bound to linger in this far-off country and you could only feel satisfied by saying, "Sun of my soul abide with me, for this world is dark and drear without Thee."

I pass the question round again. Is there anyone here who dares not say, "I do love the Savior"? Then, my dear friend, I beseech you to look that matter in the face, for if you do not love Christ heartily and sincerely, then you are none of His. And you are none of God's—you are a child of Satan. "Well," says one, "it would not yield me any comfort to know that." No, and I do not want you to find any comfort, for comfort now would be deadly to you. A good physician does not always look to the immediate ease of his patient—he has his eyes on the cure. I want you to be uncomfortable till Jesus comforts you. I want you to be ashamed of not loving Christ until you become unhappy about it.I beg you to stand at the foot of Calvary's cross and look up and see Jesus bleeding and dying, and then say, "He has done all this, and yet I do not love Him." I wish you would go into the Garden of Gethsemane and see the bloody drops of sweat fall upon the frozen ground, and hear His cries and groans for sinners, and then say, "And yet I do not love Him." I beg you to look at Him taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb with the image of death stamped on His glorious face—a death which He endured out of pure love to His enemies—and then I would have you see if you are vile enough to say, "And yet I do not love Him." I beg you in spirit to follow Him in His resurrection and to see Him as He breathes peace over His disciples and then see if you dare say, "I do not love Him." I would wish you to see Him, by faith, rising as He ascends into glory and a cloud receives Him, and then I would like you to put your hands to your brow and feel as if your heart must burst while you say, "Yet I do not love Him." I would have you see Him sitting on His throne in all His glory, adored by myriads of the blessed, with every harp string in heaven thrill-

ing out His praise as He sits at the right hand of the Father, and the Father takes delight in Him. Amid that splendor I would wish you to stand and begin to smite upon your breast, and say, "And yet, alas, this hard heart does not love Him." How I wish you would get to your chamber and pour your soul out in a flood of tears, to think that, by-and-by, He will come to judge the world in righteousness and to be admired of them that believe, and you, unless you are renewed in heart, will have to stand among that mighty throng that shall surround His great white throne and weep and wail and wish you never had been born, while the dire thought will flash through your mind, "I do not love Him. He is come to judge me and I am far off from Him, unsaved, uncleansed in His blood." I entreat you to think of it now, that you may not have to realize it later. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, O you unloving heart, and you shall be saved from your unloving spirit and taught to esteem Him whom to love is the best evidence of eternal life.—

"O love beyond all mortal thought!
Unquenchable by flood or sea!
Love that through death to man has brought
The life of immortality!
You do enkindle heaven's own fire
In hearts all dead to high desire.
Let love for love our souls inflame,
The perfect love that fails never;
And sweet hosannas to your name
Through heaven's vast dome go up forever."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 8:21-59.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—423, 807, 377.

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THE HAND OF GOD IN THE HISTORY OF A MAN
NO. 1258

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 10 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling?"
Job 7:1.

I WAS settling myself down yesterday to meditate upon the Word of God and to prepare my mind to preach the gospel to you today, when all of a sudden I had my subject marked out for me by a mournful messenger, for the angel of death pointed to it with his finger. There came into my chamber an honored elder of this church, who in broken accents told me, "Our beloved brother, Henry Olney, is dead." He is my near neighbor and I was in his house so lately that I could not believe the news. It seems that when he left the city at noon he felt a severe rheumatic pain in his shoulder, and on reaching home he sent for a doctor, who prescribed a slight remedy and advised him to lie down. He did so, and with a gasp or two, he expired. A man in the prime of life and apparently in full vigor of health, he went to his business for the last time that morning and returned to die. The blow has fallen so suddenly that I am stunned and staggered by it, nor do I think that either of his three brothers, whose familiar faces we miss this morning, have yet recovered from the amazement caused by the stroke. Many around me were with him so short a time since that it is hard to believe one's own eyes and feel sure that there he lies, a cold corpse, motionless upon the bed. But, oh, my brethren, how true it is that in the midst of life we are in death. And those who often die first are they who least expected to go. If I had said to you this morning that our brother William Olney was gone, you would have said, "We are grieved at our loss, but we do not wonder, for he has been long sick." But here, the strong and stalwart brother, who ailed nothing, has been taken away, while, thank God, the languishing invalid is still spared to us. Thus do they remain who expected to depart and they depart who expected to remain. Who among us can reckon upon a single hour? We talk of being living men—let us correct ourselves and feel, from this moment on, that we are dying men, whose every breath brings us nearer to the grave. We are and are not. We walk in a vain show and are disquieted in vain. We are unsubstantial as the shadows of the flying clouds which on a summer's day flit over the face of the field and are gone.

When I look at that seat where our departed friend sat for years, the Lord seems to have come very near to us. I could almost take my shoes off in awful consciousness of His terrible presence. We can no longer

think of the Lord as far away in heaven. He has been among us—He who touches the hills and they smoke has set His eyes upon our brother, and lo, he is not! Let me put it in a gentler manner—our Lord came into His garden to gather lilies and His hand has been filled to our sorrow. When our heavenly Father comes so near to us, and in so solemn a manner, let us ask Him wherefore He contends with us. Let us, in solemn reverence, approach Him that we may hear His answer and may be obedient to His word. The flower of the field stands amid the grass unconscious that the mower's scythe is busy, and though swath after swath has fallen beneath the pitiless stroke, the flower smiles gaily. It cares not for its associates in the same field and reckons not of its own speedy fall. Its leaves are wet with dew and its colors are bright in the sun. It mourns not for its fellows, but rejoices in unconsciousness of all that happens around it. In this respect, you are not as the grass of the field, but are endowed with understanding, so that you are able to be instructed, or at least warned by the fall of those around you. The sheep in their folds remark not that their fellows are taken away to the slaughter. The cattle graze in the meadows in happy ignorance that death is all around. You, however, are not "dumb, driven cattle." To you it is given to know your own mortality—and you cannot suffer your comrades to be taken away, one after another so rapidly, without feeling emotion and gathering wisdom. You will hear the rod and Him that has appointed it, and this morning you will ask divine grace that the dead may be your schoolmasters and yourselves the scholars who cry, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

As best I shall be able, this morning, I shall try and teach you, by the help of God's Spirit, one lesson. It is this—*divine appointment rules human life.* And when we have learned that lesson, we shall, in the second place, *draw inferences from this truth.*

I. First, then, let us consider a truth which, I trust, none of us have ever denied, but have heartily accepted ever since we have been believers. THERE IS A DIVINE APPOINTMENT RULING ALL HUMAN LIFE. Not that I single out man's existence as the sole object of divine forethought, for I believe it to be but one little corner of illimitable providence. A divine appointment arranges every event, minute or magnificent. As we look out on the world from our quiet room, it appears to be a mass of confusion. He who studies history and forgets God might think that he was looking out on chaos, for events seem flung together in terrible disarray, and the whole scene is as darkness itself, without any order. Events happen which we deeply deplore—incidents which appear to bring evil, and only evil—and we wonder why they are permitted. The picture before us, to the glance of reason, looks like a medley of color with dark shades where lights seemed necessary and glowing color where we might have looked for masses of black. Human affairs are a maze of which we cannot discover the clue. The world appears to be a tangled skein and we weary ourselves with vain endeavors to disentangle it.

But, brethren, the affairs of this world are neither tangled, nor confused, nor perplexing to Him who sees the end from the beginning. To Him all things are in due course and order, and before Him all forces

keep rank and file. God is in all and rules all. In the least as well as in the greatest, Jehovah's power is manifested. He guides the grain of dust in the March wind and the comet in its immeasurable pathway. He steers each drop of spray which is beaten back from the face of the rock and He leads forth Arcturus with his sons. God is the dictator of destinies and appoints both means and ends. He is the King of kings, ruling rulers and guiding counselors. Alike in the crash of battle and in the hush of peace, in the desolation of pestilence and famine, and in the joy of abounding harvests, He is Lord. He does according to His will, not only in the army of heaven, but among the inhabitants of this lower world. Yon fiery steeds, which dash so terribly along the highway of time, are not careering madly—there is a charioteer whose almighty hands have held the reins for ages—and will never let them go. Things are not in the hurry-burly which we imagine, but driven onward by a power which is irresistible. They are under law to God, and speed onward without deviation towards the goal which He designs. All is well, brethren! It is night, but the watchman never sleeps, and Israel may rest in peace. The tempest rages, but it is well, for our Captain is governor of storms. He who trod the waves of the Galilean lake is at the helm and at His bidding winds and waves are quiet.

Our main point is that God rules mortal life and He does so, first, *as to its term*—"Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?" He rules it, secondly, *as to its warfare,* for so the text might most properly be read—"Is there not an appointed warfare for man upon earth?" And, thirdly, He rules it *as to its service,* for the second clause of the text is, "Are not his days as the days of an hireling?"

First, then, *God's determination governs the time of human life*. We shall all acknowledge this as to *its commencement*. Not without infinite wisdom did any infant's life commence then and there, for no man is the offspring of chance. Not without a world of kindness did your life commence, dear friend, just where and when it did. Our child's little hymn, in which he thanks God that he was not "born a little slave to labor in the sun," contains a good deal of truth in it. A man's whole life is mainly guided by its commencement—had we been born as thousands are where God was never known, we might have been idolaters at this hour. Who would wish to have first seen the light at the era when our naked forefathers sacrificed to idols? Who would wish to have stepped upon the stage of life amid the dense darkness of popery, when our childish hands would have been lifted up by superstitious parents in adoration of the Virgin Mary, and we should have been taught to worship some bone fragment or rotten rug, superstitiously believed to be a relic of a saint? It is no small thing to have been born in the nineteenth century, when works of grace are to be seen on every side. Many of us should bless the Lord every day because in infancy we lay upon a Christian woman's bosom and were lulled to sleep with the sound of holy hymns, of which the name of Jesus was the theme. Our tiny feet were taught to run in the ways of righteousness, as far as parental instruction could effect the same, and this was no insignificant advantage. Blessed are the eyes which see the things which we see and hear the things which we hear!

All this is by the appointment of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our presence on earth in this day of grace was a matter altogether beyond our control, and yet it involves infinite issues—therefore let us, with deepest gratitude, bless the Lord, who has cast our lot in such an auspicious season.

The *continuance* of life is equally determined by God. He who fixed our birth has measured the interval between the cradle and the grave, and it shall not be a day longer or a day shorter than the divine decree. How many times your lungs shall heave and your pulses beat have been fixed by the eternal calculator from of old. What reflections ought to arise out of this! How willing we should be to labor on, even if we are weary, since God appoints our day and will not over-weary us, for He is no hard taskmaster. How glad we ought to be even to suffer if the Lord so ordains it. It is sweet music that God draws forth from patient sufferers, and though the strings have to be painfully tightened every now and then with many a grief and pang to us, yet if those dear hands of the chief musician can fetch out richer melody from those tightened strings, who among us would wish to have it otherwise, or ask to have the harp withdrawn from that beloved harper's hand before the wondrous strain is over? No, let us wait, for He appoints. If our griefs were the offspring of chance, we might pine to have them ended, but if the loving Lord appoints, we would not hurry Him in His processes of love. Let the Lord do what seems good to Him. Here is good cheer for those who have lain so long upon the bed of pain and who are apt to ask—"Will it never end? O Lord, will the chariots of salvation never come? Have the angels quite forgotten Your servant in his sickness? Must he forever remain a prisoner under his infirmity, loneliness, and decay? Have You placed me as a sentinel to stand upon my watchtower through a night which will never end? And shall I never be relieved from my weary guard? Shall I never know rest? Must I forever peer into the dark with these eyes so red with weeping?" Courage, brother! Courage, Sister, the Lord, the ever merciful, has appointed every moment of your sorrow and every pang of your suffering. If He ordains the number 10, it can never rise to 11, neither should you desire it to shrink to nine. The Lord's time is best—to a hair's breadth your span of life is rightly measured. God ordains all—therefore peace, restless spirit, and let the Lord have His way.

So, too, has He fixed life's *termination*. "Is there not an appointed time for man upon earth?" a time in which the pulse must cease, the blood stagnate and the eyes are closed? Yes, my brethren, it is of no use for us to indulge any idle dream of living forever here. A time of departure must come to every one of us, unless the Lord Himself should appear all of a sudden and then we shall not die, but be changed. There is no man among us that lives and shall not see death. In this war there is no discharge. Not only do the Scriptures teach us so, but our common sense and reason put the matter beyond all question.

What do the grey hairs mean which fall like snow flakes upon our heads? What does that stooping gait and failing strength mean? What does the dimness of the eyes and the tottering of the limbs mean? Do they not all show that the house is about to come down, for the frame

and plaster of it are beginning to give way? Yet our earthly house will not fail us till the time ordained of heaven. There is an appointed time for death and God has fixed how we shall die, when we shall die, and where we shall die—

"Plagues and deaths around me fly,
Till He please I cannot die
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love sees fit."

Diseases eager to slay are in ambush all around us, but none of their swords can come at us till Jehovah gives them leave. Behold, the Lord shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust, nor shall nightly pestilence, nor midday destruction make you afraid—

"What though a thousand at your side
At your right hand ten thousand died,
Our God His chosen people saves
Amongst the dead, amidst the graves."

We are immortal till our work is done, but that work will not last forever, and when it is concluded we shall have fulfilled our day and shall receive our summons home.

All this is true. None will venture to dispute it, but let us remember that it is true for ourselves at this moment. For you, my brethren and sisters, it is true while you sit here. Realize it, and do not look on others as dying men while you yourselves are secure of a long life. Be you also prepared to meet your God suddenly, for so you may be called to do. This fact is most solemn. We shall not live, but die, and that death may come in an instant. As I saluted my brothers this morning in the vestry, I could not help expressing my pleasure and surprise that any of us were alive, for certainly it was quite as much a wonder that certain of us were alive, as that our friend should be dead. We might as readily have been taken away as he and even more readily. God had ordained *his* death, but He might have ordained ours. "Be you also ready; for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes."

Yet this fact, to my mind, is most strengthening. The doctrine of predestination, when really believed, is like steel medicine. It infuses a deal of iron into the mental system and builds up strong men. I am not such a predestinarian as Mohammed, who bade his soldiers rush to the fight, "For," he said, "when your time comes to die you will die at home as well as in the battle, and paradise is to be found beneath the shadow of swords." But still I see that while the doctrine makes some men slumber, it is, to nobler souls, a mighty source of energy and a fountain of courage. If duty calls you into danger—if you have to nurse the sick who are laid low with foul diseases—never shrink, but run all risks if love to God or man demand them of you. You will not die by a stray arrow from death's quiver. The Lord alone can recall your breath. Your death is not left to chance—it is determined by a heavenly Father's gracious will—therefore be not afraid. Be not so fearful of pain, or so anxious to preserve life as to be held back where Jesus calls you, for in such a case he that saves his life shall lose it. You may not be reckless and rush on danger without reason—that were madness—but you will, I trust, be

brave and never fear to face death when the voice of God calls you into peril.

Moreover, how consoling is this truth for, if the Father of our Lord Jesus arranges all, then our friends do not die untimely deaths. The beloved of the Lord are not cut off before their time. They go into Jesus' bosom when they are ready to be received there. God has appointed the times for the gathering in of His fruit. Some of them are sweet even in early spring and He gathers them. Others are as a basket of summer fruit and He takes these also while the year is young, while yet another company needs to remain among us till autumn mellows them. Each class shall be gathered in its season. Now of all this we are, by no means, competent judges. We know nothing, for we are infants of a day. God knows best. It were better that our friend should die, as die he did, than that he should live, otherwise he had lived. Be sure of that. Yes, God has appointed the commencement, the continuance, and the conclusion of this mortal life.

But we must now consider the other translation of our text. It is generally given in the margin of the Bibles. "Is there not an appointed *warfare* to man upon earth?" Which teaches us that *God has appointed life to be a warfare*. To all men it will be so, whether bad or good. Every man will find himself a soldier under some captain or another. Alas, for those men who are battling against God and His truths—they will, in the end, be clothed with dishonor and defeat. I shall, however, speak mainly of the righteous and, truly, their experience shows that life is one long struggle from which we never cease till we hear the words, "Your warfare is accomplished." Brethren, life is a warfare and therefore we are all men under authority. No Christian is free to follow his own devices. We are all under law to Christ. A soldier surrenders his own will to that of his commander. His captain says to him, "Go," and he goes, or, "Do this," and he does it. Such is the Christian's life—a life of willing subjection to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. In consequence of this, we have our place fixed and our order arranged for us—and our life's relative positions are all prescribed. A soldier has to keep rank and step with the rest of the line. He has a relation to the man on his right, to his comrade on his left. He bears a relation which he must not violate to each officer and especially to his commander-in-chief. God has appointed for you then, dear brother, to be a father or to be a son, to be a master or to be a servant, to be a teacher or to be taught. See that you keep your place. As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place. In our appointed warfare, happy is the man who, from first to last, keeps in order with the forces of the Lord of hosts and cheerfully fulfils the divine purposes.

As we have a warfare to accomplish, we must expect hardships. A soldier must not reckon upon ease. During a campaign he has neither house nor home. Perhaps last night he pitched his tent in a happy valley, but he must be up and away, and his tent must tomorrow be exposed on the bleak mountain side. He has renounced the luxuries of life and the joys of repose. Forced marches, light slumbers, scant fare, and hard blows are his portion—he would be foolish to look for ease and enjoy-

ment during a campaign. O you sons of men, the Lord has appointed life to be a warfare. Why, then, do you wrap yourselves about with silken garments and sew pillows for your armholes, and say to yourselves, "Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years. Eat, drink and be merry"? You must not do so. And if the Lord, by trial, prevents your doing so, you must not quarrel with Him, but must feel that such treatment must be expected in this war.

If life is a warfare, we must look for contests and struggles. The Christian man must not expect to go to heaven without opposition. A soldier who never meets an enemy at all is not renowned. We count his valor light and reckon him to be as some vain carpet knight, "whose best delight is but to wear a braid of his fair lady's hair." The man who is scarred and gashed, maimed and wounded—he is the hero to whom men pay homage. You must fight if you would reign. Your predecessors swam through seas of blood to win the crown and though the form of battle may be changed, yet the spirit of the enemy is unaltered. You must still contend against sin and bear up under trouble, for only through much tribulation will you inherit the kingdom of God.

It is a warfare, brethren, for all these reasons and yet more so because we must always be upon the watch against danger. In a battle, no man is safe. Where bullets fly, who can reckon upon life for a moment? Brethren, the age is peculiarly dangerous. Perhaps every preacher before me has said as much and every preacher after me will say the same for his times—yet still, I say—in this peculiar age, there are a thousand perils for the soul, from superstition on the one hand and skepticism on the other, from rude self-reliance and indolent trust in others, from a wicked world and an apostate church. You must not marvel that it is so, for war is raging. The enemy has not laid down his weapons. The war drum is still beaten, therefore do not lay down your arms, but fight manfully for your King and country—for Christ and for His church.

Blessed be God that the text says, "Is there not an *appointed* warfare?" Then, brethren, it is not our warfare, but one that God has appointed for us, in which He does not expect us to wear out our armor, or bear our own charges, or find our own rations, or supply our own ammunition. The armor that we wear, we have not to construct. The sword we wield, we have not to fabricate. All things are ready for us. Our great Captain manages the commissariat with unquestioned skill and unbounded liberality. Yes, the warfare is so much His warfare that He is with us in it. The Greek soldiers, when they marched against the Persians, traversed many a weary league, but that which comforted them and made every man a hero was that Alexander marched when they marched. If he had been carried luxuriously, like the Persian monarch, while they were toiling over the hills and dales, they might have murmured. If he had been seen to drink of costly wines while they were parched with thirst, they might have complained. But Alexander, like the great commander he was, marched in the ranks with his soldiers, so that they saw him faint and weary as they were. They saw him wiping the sweat from his brow as they did. And when, as was his due, they brought him the first crystal draught they could obtain, he put it to the side and said, "Give it to the

sick soldiers, I will not drink till every man can take a draught." O glorious Jesus. Surely You have done the same and more. You have borne resistance even unto blood. You have known toil and agony even to a sweat of gore. Suffering, weakness and self-denial You have drank of, for You saved others, but You could not save Yourself. Courage, brethren, then! Our warfare is of the Lord. Let us go forth to it, conquering and to conquer.

Thirdly. *The Lord has also determined the service of our life*. All men are servants to some master or another, neither can any of us avoid the servitude. The greatest men are only so much the more the servants of others. The prime minister is only the first and most laborious of servants. The yoke upon the neck of the emperor is heavier than that which galls the shoulders of the serf. Despots are the most in bondage of all men. Happy will it be for us if through divine grace we have chosen Jesus for our Master and have become His servants for life—then indeed we are free, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light—and in learning of Him we shall find rest unto our souls. If we are now the servants of the Lord Jesus, this life is a set time of a labor and apprenticeship to be worked out. I am bound by solemn indentures to my Lord and Master till my term of life shall run out, and I am right glad to have it so. Jacob, when he had served seven years, was glad to serve seven more for the love of Rachel and we, for love of Jesus, would serve 70 times seven if He desired it. But even then, the longest term of life would have an end, even as ours also will. Here below our term is fixed, even as the days of an hireling.

Now, a servant who has let himself out for a term of years has not a moment that he can call his own, nor have any of us, if we are God's people. We have not a moment, no, not a breath, nor a faculty, nor a farthing that we may honestly reserve. We have transferred ourselves to Jesus Christ forever and we belong wholly to Him. A servant does nothing of his own mind, he does what his master tells him—this also is our condition. We have an appointed service and we receive orders from our Lord, which orders are our law. A servant has his occupations prescribed. He may have to work indoors or outdoors. He may have to be near the house or far off in the field. He may be sent on errands, or bid to stay at home, but he does not choose his labor or the place of it—he accepts what is chosen for him by his superior. Are we not glad to have it so? Does not our heart say, "Anything, everything for Jesus"? That should be our spirit. The servant, moreover, expects to be sometimes weary and spent, is it not natural? To a servant who applies for your situation and says, "I do not expect to work hard. I want large wages and little work," you would say, "Yes, there are many of your mind, but I shall not employ one of the sort if I know it." Your Lord and Master thinks the same. You must expect to toil in His service till you are ready to faint, and then His grace will renew your strength.

A servant knows that his time is limited. If it is weekly service, he knows that his engagement may be closed on Saturday. If he is hired by the month, he knows how many days there are in a month and he expects it to end. If he is engaged the year, he knows the day of the year

when his service shall run out. As for us, we do not know when our term will be complete, but we do know that it will conclude, therefore we would live in view of that conclusion. It is as well that the Lord has not told us when the appointed end will be or we might have loitered till near the close. But He has left that period unrevealed that we may be always laboring and waiting for His coming. None the less, it is sure that there is an appointed time and our work will come to an end.

The hireling expects his wages—that is one reason for his industry. We, too, expect ours—not of debt, truly, but of grace—still a gracious reward. God does not employ servants without paying them wages, as many of our merchants now do. They are His own children and therefore they would be glad enough to serve without a hope of wage, but that is not God's way. He prefers that they also should have "respect unto the recompense of reward." While the child's relationship shall be carried out with blessed liberality, so shall the servant's relation too, and wages shall be liberally given. Let us look forward, brethren, let us look forward to the great day when the Master shall call His servants together and give them their wages. The reward, if it were of debt, would be a very scanty one, and in fact, it would be none at all, for we are unprofitable servants. But, the wages being of grace, there is room for giving every man his penny—room for giving to us exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think. There I leave the subject of service—it is all appointed for us, let us fulfill it.

II. Secondly, and briefly, THE INFERENCES TO BE DRAWN FROM THIS FACT. First, there is *Job's inference*. Job's inference was that as there was only an appointed time and he was like a servant employed by the year, he might be allowed to wish for life's speedy close and therefore he says—"As a servant earnestly desires the shadow, and as an hireling looks for the reward of his work." Job was right, in a measure, but not altogether so. There is a sense in which every Christian may look forward to the end of life with joy and expectancy and may pray for it. I wish that some believers were in a state of mind which would fairly admit of their doing so. Many of us can heartily sympathize with the songster who penned the verses beginning—

"I would not live always, I ask not to stay
Where storm after storm rises dark o'er the way.
The few fleeting mornings that dawn on us here
Are enough for life's sorrows, enough for its cheer.
Who, who would live always away from his God—
Away from yon heaven, that blissful abode,
Where rivers of pleasure flow o'er the bright plains,
And the noontide of glory eternally reigns?"

At the same time, there are necessary modifications to this desire to depart and a great many of them, for, first, it would be a very lazy thing for a servant to be always looking for Saturday night, and to be always sighing and groaning because the days are so long. The man who wants to be off to heaven before his life's work is done does not seem to me to be quite the man that is likely to go there at all. He that is fit to go there and serve God is one who is willing to stop here and do the same. Besides, while our days are like those of a hireling, we serve a better Master

than other servants do. There are employers of such a kind that servants might be very glad never to see their faces any more. They are so sharp, so acid, so domineering. But our Master is love itself. Blessed be His name, His service is perfect freedom. We are never so happy and never so truly helping ourselves as when we are altogether serving Him. For my part, I can say of Him that I love my Master, I love His service, I love His house, I love His children and I love everything about Him. And if He were going to discharge me at the end of this life, I would beg Him to let me live here forever, for I could not bear to be dismissed. It is one of my dearest hopes, in going to heaven, that He will employ me still. Moreover, we are not like other servants, for this reason—we are one with our Master—His brethren, His spouse, His body—and we are under such deep obligation to Him that it is unspeakable joy to work for Him. If He gave us no wages it would be wage enough to be allowed to wait upon Him—

"For why, O blessed Jesus Christ,
Should I not love You well?
Not for the sake of winning heaven,
Or of escaping hell."

But because of Your own sweetness, goodness, and dear love to me, ought I not to be Yours forever? Yes, yes. Under some aspects you might feel that it was better to depart and be with Christ, but from other points of view you see differently and check the wish, so that, like Paul, you are in a strait betwixt the two and you don't know which to choose. It is a great mercy that the choice does not lie with you. All things are settled for us. Thus you see there are facts which modify Job's inference and forbid our excessive longing to close life's weary day.

I will tell you *the devil's inference*. The devil's inference is that if our time, warfare, and service are appointed, there is no need to care and we may cast ourselves down from the pinnacle of the temple, or do any other rash thing, for we shall only work out our destiny. So argues the archenemy, though he knows better. How many men have drawn most damnable conclusions from most blessed truths. And these men know when they are doing it, that their conclusions are absurd. "Oh," they say, "we need not turn to Christ, for if we are ordained to eternal life we shall be saved." Yes, sirs, but why will you eat at mealtime today? Why do you eat at all? For if you are to live you will live. Why go to bed tonight? If you are ordained to sleep, you will sleep. Why will you take down your shop shutters tomorrow and exhibit your goods and try to sell them? If you are predestinated to be rich you will be rich. Ah, I see, you will not act the thing out. You are not such fools as you look. You are more knaves than fools, and your excuse is a piece of deceit. If it is not so, why not act upon it in daily life? He has a false heart who dares to suck out of the blessed truth of predestination the detestable inference that he may sit still and do nothing. Why, sirs, nothing in the world more nerves me for work than the belief that God's purposes have appointed me to this service. Being convinced that the eternal forces of immutable wisdom and unfailing power are at my back, I put forth all my strength as becomes a "worker together with God." The bravest men that ever lived, like Cromwell and his Ironsides, believed in God's decrees, but they also kept their powder dry. They relied upon everlasting purposes, but also believed in

human responsibility, and so must you and I. Your years are appointed, but do not commit lewdness or drink with the drunk, or you will shorten your days. Your warfare is appointed, O man, but do not go and play the fool, or your troubles will be multiplied. Your service is allotted you, O believer, but do not loiter, or you will grieve the Spirit of God and mar your work.

I will now give you *the sick man's inference*—"Is there not an appointed time to men upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling?" The sick man, therefore, concludes that his pains will not last forever and that every suffering is measured out by divine love. Truly, disease is a bitter draught, but Jehovah Rophi often prescribes it as a medicine for spiritual disease. When the Lord knows that the appointed affliction has worked out all His purpose, He will either raise up the patient to walk among the sons of men again, or else He will take him to His bosom in glory. Let him be patient, therefore, and in confidence and quietness shall be his strength.

Next comes *the mourner's inference*—one which we do not always draw quite so readily as we should. It is this—"My child has died, but not too soon. My husband is gone, ah, God, what shall I do? Where shall my widowed heart find sympathy? Still he has been taken away at the right time. The Lord has done as it pleased Him and He has done wisely." If you have not yet come to mourning over the dead, but have everyday to sympathize with a living sufferer who is gradually melting away amidst wearisome pain and constant anguish, ask grace to enable you to feel, "It is well." It is a grand triumph of grace when the heart is neither stoic, unsympathetic, nor rebellious—when you can grieve but not rebel in the grieving, mourn without murmuring—and sorrow without sinning. Pray for some who have this trial. Pray for them that grace may be perfect in their weakness.

Furthermore, let us draw *the healthy man's inference*. Do you know what inference I have drawn from the sudden death of my friend? I thought—in a moment it struck me—"Ah, if I had died last Saturday afternoon instead of Mr. Henry Olney, should I have left all the concerns that I have in hand quite in order?" I have no end of business—a great deal too much—and I resolved, "I will get all square and in order as if I were going off, for perhaps I am." Dear brethren, I want you to feel the same. You are healthy, but be prepared to die. Have your will made and your accounts squared and fit for your successor to take up. What you do, do quickly! Have your will made and if you are wealthy, do not forget the Lord's work. Mr. Whitefield used to say, "I could not sleep at night if I had left my gloves out of their place, for," he said, "I would leave everything in order." Trim the ship, brethren, for you know not what weather is coming. Clear the decks for action, for no one knows when the last enemy will be in sight. Your best friend is coming, make ready for His entertainment. Be as a bride adorned for her husband, and not as a slovenly woman ashamed to be seen.

Lastly, there is *the sinner's* inference. "My time, my warfare, and my service are appointed, but what have I done in them? I have waged a warfare against God and have served in the pay of the devil, what will the

end be?" Sinner, you will run your length. You will fulfill your day to your black master. You will fight his battle and earn your pay, but what will the wages be? The end comes and the wage-paying—are you ready to reap what you have sowed? Having taken sides with the devil against yourself and against your God, are you prepared for the result? Look to it, I pray you, and beseech the Lord, through Jesus Christ, to give you grace to escape from your present position and enlist on the side of Christ.

I ask you, sirs, who are sitting in this gallery and who have not believed in Jesus—and you men and women all over this building who are unregenerate—if, instead of the decease of the brother who has fallen I had to speak of your death, where must you have been? If you had died in sin, we are not among those who would have read a hypocritical service over you and thanked God that you were taken. We would not have insulted the Most High by saying that we ourselves hoped to die in that fashion. We dare not so have blasphemed the Majesty of heaven. You know we should have laid you into the grave very silently with many a tear more salty than usual, because deep down in our spirit there would have been that dreary thought, "He died impenitent. He died unregenerate. He is lost! He is lost!" Weep not for our brother, dead in his prime, whose children mourn him! Weep not for him, though his sorrowing wife bends over his corpse and cannot persuade herself that his spirit is gone! Weep not for him, but weep for those who have died and are lost forever, driven from the presence of God! In their eternal warfare, there will be no discharge. And in their dreadful slavery, there will be no end, for there is no appointed time for man when once he leaves this earth. Time is over and the angel who puts one foot upon the sea, and another upon the land, swears by the Eternal that time shall be no more and the condition of the lost spirit is finally settled, settled forever. Beware, therefore, and be wise, for Christ's sake and your own. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Job 7.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—90, 851, 839.

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THERE GO THE SHIPS
NO. 1259

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

"There go the ships."
Psalm 104:26.

I WAS walking, the other day, by the side of the sea, looking out upon the English Channel. It so happened that there was a bad wind for the vessels going down the Channel and they were lying in great numbers between the shore and the Goodwins. I should think I counted more than a hundred, all waiting for a change of wind. All of a sudden the wind shifted to a more favorable quarter and it was interesting to see with what rapidity all sails were spread and the vessels began to disappear like birds on the wing. It was a sight such as one might not often see, but worth traveling a hundred miles to gaze upon, to see them all sail like a gallant squadron and disappear southward on their voyages. "There go the ships," was the exclamation that naturally rose to one's lips. The psalmist thought it worth his while to pen the fact which he, too, had noticed, though it is very questionable whether David had ever seen anything like the number of vessels which pass our coasts. Certainly he had seen none to be compared with them for tonnage.

The first lesson which may be learned from the ships and the sea is this—*every part of the earth is made with some design*. The land, of course, yields "grass for the cattle and herb for the service of man," but what about the broad acres of the sea? We cannot sow them nor turn them into pasture. The reaper fills not his arms from the briny furrows. They give neither seed for the sower nor bread for the eater, neither do herds of cattle cover them as they do the thousand hills of earth. Remorselessly swallowing up all that is cast upon it, the thankless ocean makes no return of fruit or flower. Is not the larger part of the world given up to waste? "No," says David, and so say we—"There go the ships." The sea benefits man by occasioning navigation and yielding besides an enormous harvest of fishes of many kinds. Besides which, as the blood is necessary for the body, so it is necessary for this world that there should be upon its surface a vast mass of water in perpetual motion. That measureless gathering together of the waters is an amazing instance of divine wisdom in its existence, its perpetual ebb and flow, and even in its form and quantity. In the ocean, there is not a drop of water too much nor a drop too little. There is not a single mile of sea more than there ought to be, nor less than there should be. An exact balance and proportion is maintained and we little know how the blooming of the tiny flower or the flourishing of the majestic cedar would be affected were the balance disturbed. Between the tiny drop of dew upon each blade of grass and the boundless main, there is a relation and proportion such as only

an infinite mind could have arranged. Remember also that the ocean's freshness tends to promote life and health among the sons of men. It is good that there is sea, or the land might devour its inhabitants by sickness. God has made nothing in vain. Ignorance gazes on the stormy deep and judges it to be a vast disorder, the mother of confusion and the nurse of storms. But better knowledge teaches us what revelation had before proclaimed, namely, that in wisdom has the Lord made all things.

But does not the ocean grievously separate lovers and friends? Many a wife thinks of her husband on the far-off Pacific. Many a mother casts an anxious thought towards her sailor boy. And both are half inclined to think it is a mistake to place so vast a portion of the globe as a cruel dividing gulf between loving hearts. Others evidently thought so in years gone by, for among the figurative excellences of the new earth we are told that there shall be no more sea. But what a mistake it is to think that the sea is a divider—it is the great uniter of the races of men—for, "There go the ships." It is the highway of nations by which they reach each other far more readily than they could have done had no sea existed and arid deserts or towering mountains had intervened. This is one instance in which we do not understand God's designs, for we judge them upon the surface. As the sea apparently divides, but really unites nations, so often in providence, things look one way but go another. We say, "All these things are against me," when all things are working together for our good. We judge that to be a curse which, in the deep intent of God, is a rich blessing. And we write that down as among the ills of life which, in God's esteem, is reckoned to be among its choicest mercies. Judge not according to the sight of the eyes, or the changeful feelings of the heart, but unstaggeringly believe in the infallible goodness of our great Father in heaven. As the child mistakes God's design in the sea, so will you also mistake His designs in providence if you set up yourself as the measurer of the infinite—

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace.
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face."

Our subject, however, shall not be the uses of the sea, but this one simple matter—"There go the ships."

I. And, first, WE SEE THAT THE SHIPS GO. "There go the ships." *The ships are made to go*. The ship is not made to lie forever upon the stocks or to be shut up in the docks. It is generally looked upon as an old hulk of little service when it has to lie up in ordinary and rot in the river. But a ship is made to go, and as you see that it goes, remember that you also were made to go. Activity in Christian work is the result and design of grace in the soul. How I wish we could launch some of you. You are, we trust, converted, but you as yet serve but slender uses. Very quiet, sluggish, and motionless, you lie on the stocks by the month together, and we have nearly as much trouble to launch you as Brunel had with the "Great Eastern." I have tried hard to knock away your blocks, remove your dogshores, and grease your ways, but you need hydraulic rams to stir you. When will you feel that you must go and learn to "walk the wa-

ter as a thing of life." O, for a grand launch. Hundreds are lying high and dry and to them I would give the motto, "Launch out into the deep." The ships go, when will you go too?

The ships in going at last disappear from view. The vessel flies before the wind and very speedily it is gone—and such is our destiny before long. Our life is gone as the swift ships. We think ourselves stationary, but we are always moving on. As we sit in these pews so quietly, the angel of time is bearing us between his wings at a speed more rapid than we can guess. Every single tick of the clock is but a vibration of his mighty wings and he bears us on, and on, and on and never stays to rest either by day or night. Swift as the arrow from the bow, we are always speeding towards the target. How short time is! How very short our life is! Let each one say, "How short *my* life is!" No man knows how near he is to his grave. Perhaps if he could see it, it is just before him. I almost wish he could see it, for a yawning grave might make some men start to reason and to thought. That yawning grave is there, though they perceive it not—

"A point of time, a moment's space,
May land me in yon heavenly place,
Or shut me up in hell."

"There go the ships," and there go you also. You are never in one place. You are always flying, swift as the eagle, or to come back to the text, as the swift ship, yet "all men think all men mortal but themselves." The oldest man here probably thinks he will outlive some of the younger ones. The man who is soonest to die may be the very man of us all who has the least thought of death. And he that is nearest to his departure is, perhaps, the man who least thinks of it. Just as in the ship all were awake and every man praying to his God except Jonah, for whom the storm was raging, so does it often happen that in a congregation every man may be aroused and made to think of his latter end except the one man, the marked man, who will never see tomorrow's sun. As you see the ships, think of your mortality!

The ships, as they go, are going on business. Some few ships go here and there upon pleasure, but for the most part the ships have something serious to do. They have a charter and they are bound for a certain port. And this teaches us how we should go on the voyage of life with a fixed, earnest, weighty purpose. May I ask each one of you, have you something to do and is it worth doing? You are sailing, but are you sailing like a mere pleasure yacht, whose port is everywhere, which scuds and flies before every fitful wind and is a mere butterfly with no serious work before it? You may be as heavily laden and dingy as a collier, there may be nothing of beauty or swiftness about you, but after all, the main thing is the practical result of your voyage. Dear friend, what are you doing? What have you been doing? And what do you contemplate doing? I should like every young man here just to look at himself. Here you are, young man. You certainly were not sent into this world merely to wear a coat and to stand so many feet in your stockings. You must have been sent here with some intention. A noble creature like man—and man is a noble creature as compared with the animal creation—is surely made for

something. What were *you* made for? Not merely to enjoy yourself. That cannot be. You certainly are not "a butterfly born in a bower," neither were you made to be creation's blot and blank. Neither can you have been created to do mischief. It would be an evil thing for you to be a mere serpent in the world, to creep in the grass and wound the traveler. No, you must be made for something. What is that something? Are you answering your end? We were made for God's glory. Nothing short of this is worthy of immortal beings. Have we sought that glory? Are we seeking it now? If not, I commend to your consideration this thought, that as the ships go on their business, so ought men to live with a fixed and worthy purpose. I would say this, not only to young men, but with greater earnestness still to men who may have wasted 40 years. O, how could I dare to stand before this congregation tonight and have to say, "Friends, I have had no objective. I have lived in this world for myself alone. I have had no grand purpose before me"? I should be utterly ashamed if that were the fact. And if any man is obliged to feel that his purpose was such that he dares not acknowledge it, or that he has only existed to make so much money, or gain a position in life, or to enjoy himself, but he has never purposed to serve his God, I would say to him, Wake up, wake up, I pray you, to a noble purpose, worthy of a man. May God, the ever-blessed Spirit, set this before you in the light of eternity and in the light of Jesus' dying love. And may you be awakened to solemn, earnest purpose and pursuit. "There go the ships," but not idly. They go upon business.

These ships, however, whatever their errand is, *sail upon a changeful sea*. Today the sea is smooth like glass. The ship, however, makes very small headway. Tomorrow there is a breeze which fills out the sail and the ship goes merrily before it. Perhaps, before night comes on, the breeze increases to a gale and then rushes from a gale into a hurricane. Let the mariner see to, it when the storm-winds are out, for the ship needs to be staunch to meet the tempest. Mark how in the tempestuous hour the sea mingles with the clouds and the clouds with the sea. See how the ship mounts up to heaven on the crest of the wave and then dives into the abyss in the furrow between the enormous billows—until the mariners reel to and fro and stagger like drunken men. Soon they have weathered the storm and, perhaps, tomorrow it will be calm again. "There go the ships" on an element which is a proverb for fickleness, for we say, "false as the smooth, deceitful sea." *"They go*," you say, "upon the sea, but I dwell upon the solid earth." Ah, good sir, there is not much to choose. There is nothing stable beneath yon waxing and waning moon. We say *"terra firma,"* but where, where is *terra firma?* What man is he who has found out the rock immovable? Certainly not he who looks to this world for it. He has it not who thinks he has, for many plunge from riches into poverty, from honor to disgrace, from power to servitude. Who says, "My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved"? He speaks as the foolish speak. It is a voyage, sir, and even with Christ on board, it is a voyage in which storms will occur. It is a voyage in which you may have to say, "Master, do You not care that we perish?" Expect changes, then.

Do not hold anything on earth too firmly. Trust in God and be on the watch, for who knows what may be on the morrow? "There go the ships."

II. But now, having spoken upon that, our second point is, HOW GO THE SHIPS? What makes them go? For there are lessons here for Christians. We leave our steamships out of the question, as they were not known in David's day and therefore not intended. But how go the ships? Well, *they must go according to the wind*. They cannot make headway without favoring gales. And if our port is heaven, there is no getting there except by the blessed Spirit's blowing upon us. He blows where He wishes and we need that He should breathe upon us. We never steer out of the port of destruction upon our venturesome voyage till the heavenly wind drives us out to sea. And when we are out upon the ocean of spiritual life, we make no progress unless we have His favoring breath. We are dependent upon the Spirit of God even more than the mariners upon the breeze. Let us all know this and therefore cry—

Celestial breeze, no longer stay,
But fill my sails and speed my way."

It is not possible to insist too much on the humbling truth, "Without Me you can do nothing." It helps to check self-confidence and it exalts the Holy Spirit. Unless we honor Him, He will not honor us. Therefore, let us cheerfully acknowledge our absolute dependence upon Him.

But still, the mariner does not go by the wind without exertion on his own part, for the sails must be spread and managed so that the wind may be utilized. One man will go many knots, while another with the same breeze goes but few, for there is a good deal of tacking about needed sometimes to use the little wind or the cross wind which may prevail. Sometimes all the sails must be spread, but at other times only a part. Management is required. If some were spread, they might take the wind out of others, and so the ship might lose instead of gaining. There is a deal of work on board a ship. I believe that some people have a notion that the ship goes of itself and that the sailors have nothing to do but sit down and enjoy themselves. But if you have ever been to sea as an able-bodied seaman, you have discovered that for an easy life you must not be one of a ship's crew. And so, mark you, we are dependent upon the Spirit of God, but He puts us into motion and action. And if Christian men sit down and say, "Oh, the Spirit of God will do the work," you will find the Spirit of God will do nothing of the sort. The only operation which He will be likely to perform will be to convince you that you are a sluggard and that you will come to poverty. The Spirit of God makes men earnest, fervent, living, and intense. He "works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure." We have sails to manage to catch the favoring breeze and we shall need all the strength we can obtain if we are to make good headway in the voyage of life. Some professors say, "God will save His own people." I am afraid He will never save *them*. They expect there will come good times when a great number of the elect will be gathered in, but they fold their arms and do nothing at all to promote the spread of the gospel. When they see others a little busy, they say, "Ah, mere excitement!" and so on. They tell us God will have His own, to which I generally reply that I believe He will, but I do not believe He will have *them*,

because if they were His own they would not talk in that fashion, for those who are God's own people have a zeal for God and a love for souls. Do you not remember what God said to David? "When you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees then shall you bestir yourself." Not, "Then shall you sit still and say 'God will do it.'" When David heard the angels coming over the tops of the trees to fight the Philistines—when he heard their soft tread among the leaves, like the rustling of the wind—then he was to bestir himself, and so, when God's Spirit comes to work in the church, the Christian must bestir himself and not sit still. "There go the ships." They go with the wind, but they are the scene of great industry, or else the wind would whistle through the yards and the ship would make no voyages. Thus, brethren, we see dependence and energy united—faith sweetly showing itself in good works.

"There go the ships." How do they go? Well, *they have to be guided and steered by the helm*. The helm is a little thing, but yet it rules the vessel. As the helm is turned, so is the vessel guided. Look you well to it, Christian, that your motives and purposes are always right. Your love is the helm of the vessel. Where your affection is, your thoughts and actions tend to be. If you love the world, you will drift with the world. But if the love of the Father is in you, then your vessel will go towards God and towards divine things. O, see to it that Christ has His hands on the tiller and that He guides you towards the haven of perfect peace.

The ship being guided by the helm, *he who manages the helm seeks direction from charts and light*s. "There go the ships," but they do not go of themselves, without management and wisdom. Thought is exercised and knowledge and experience. There is an eye on deck which at night looks out for yonder revolving light, or the colored ray of the light of the ship just ahead there. And the thoughtful brain says, "I must steer southwest of such a light," or, "to the north of such a light, or I shall be upon the sands." Besides mere lookouts upon the sea, that anxious eye also busies itself with the chart, scans the stars, and takes observations of the moon. The captain's mind is exercised to learn exactly where the vessel is and where she is going, lest the good ship unawares should come to mischief. And so, dear brethren, if we are to get to heaven, we must study well the Scriptures. We must look well to every warning and guiding light of the Spirit's kindling and ask for direction from above, for as the ships go not at haphazard, so neither will any Christian his way to heaven unless he watches and prays and looks up daily, saying, "Guide me in a plain path, O God."

The voyage of a ship on the main ocean seems to me to be an admirable picture of the life of faith. The sailor does not see a road before him, or any land mark or sea mark, yet is sure of his course. He relies upon fixed lights in heaven, for far out he can see no beacon or light on the sea. His calculations, based on the laws of the heavenly bodies, are sure guides on a wild wilderness where no keel ever leaves a furrow to mark the way. The Late Captain Basil Hall, one of the most scientific officers in the navy, tells the following interesting incident. He once sailed from San Blas, on the west coast of Mexico. After a voyage of 8,000 miles, occupy-

ing 89 days, he arrived off Rio de Janeiro, having in this interval passed through the Pacific Ocean, rounded Cape Horn and crossed the South Atlantic without making land or seeing a single sail except an American whaler. When, within a week's sail of Rio, he set seriously about, determining by lunar observations, the position of his ship, and then steered his course by those common principles of navigation which may be safely employed for short distances between one known station and another. Having arrived within what he considered, from his computations, 15 or 20 miles of the coast, he hove to at four o'clock in the morning to await the break of day, and then bore up, proceeding cautiously, on account of a thick fog. As this cleared away, the crew had the satisfaction of seeing the great Sugar Loaf Rock which stands on one side of the harbor's mouth, so nearly right ahead, that they had not to alter their course above a point in order to hit the entrance of the port. This was the first land they had seen for nearly three months, after crossing so many seas, and being set backwards and forwards by innumerable currents and foul winds. The effect upon all on board was electric, and giving way to their admiration, the sailors greeted the commander with a hearty cheer. And what a cheer will we give when, after many a year's sailing by faith, we at last see the pearly gates right straight ahead and enter into the fair havens without needing to shift a point. Glory be to the Captain of our salvation. It will be all well with us when the fog of this life's care shall lift, and we shall see the light of heaven.

Once more, how go the ships? They not only go according to the wind, guided by the helm and the chart, but some ships will go better than others, *according to their build.* With the same amount of wind, one vessel makes more way than another. Now it is a blessed thing when the grace of God gives a Christian a good build. There are some church members who are so oddly shaped that somehow they never seem to cut the water. Even the Holy Spirit does not make much of them. They will get into harbor at last, but they will need a world of tugging. The snail did get into the ark—I often wonder how he did it—he must have got up very early that morning. However, the snail got in as well as the greyhound, and so there are many Christian people who will get to heaven, but heaven alone knows how, for they are such an odd sort of people that they seem to make no progress in the divine life. I would sooner live in heaven with them forever than be with them 15 minutes here below. God seems to shape some Christian minds in a more perfect model than others, so that having simplicity of character, warmth of heart, zealous temperaments, and generous spirits, when the wind of the Spirit comes, they cut through the foam.

Now, I suspect that some good people have by degrees become like the "Great Eastern" a short time since, namely, foul under water. They cannot go because they are covered with barnacles. A ship is greatly impeded in its voyage if it carries a quantity of barnacles on her bottom. I know lots of Christian people—I could point them out tonight, but I will not—who are covered with barnacles. They cannot go because of some secret inconsistency, or love of the things of this world rather than the love of

God. They need laying up and cleaning a bit, so as to get some of the barnacles off. It is a rough process, but it is one to which some of God's vessels have to be exposed. What headway they would make towards heaven if that which hinders were removed. Sometimes when a man is on a bed of sickness, he is losing his barnacles and sometimes when a man has been rich and wealthy and has lost all he had, it takes off the barnacles. When we have lost friends we love and whom we have made idols of, we have been sorry to lose them—but it has cleaned off our barnacles. And when we have got out to sea, there has been an ease about the going and we have scarcely known how it was, but God knew that He had made us more fit for His service by the trials of life to which He exposed us.

That is how the ships go. There are many mysteries about them and there are many in us. God makes us go by the gales of His Spirit. O, that we may be trim for going, buoyant and swift to be moved, and so may we make a grand voyage to heaven with Christ Jesus at the helm.

III. Thirdly and briefly. When I saw these ships go I happened to be near a station of Lloyd's. I noticed that they ran up flags as the vessels went by, to which the vessels replied. I suppose they were *asking questions*—to know their names and what their cargo was, where they were going, and so on. Now I am going to act as Lloyd's tonight, and put up the flags and ask you something about yourselves. The third point then will be—the ships go, LET US SIGNAL THEM.

And, first, *who is your owner?* "There go the ships," but who is your owner? You do not reply, but I think I can make a guess. There are some hypocrites about who make fine pretensions, but they are not holy living people. They even dare to come to the Lord's Table and yet they drink of the cup of devils. They will sing pious hymns with us and then sing lascivious ditties with their familiars. I would say to such a man—you are a rotten vessel, you do not belong to King Jesus. Every timber is staunch in His vessels. They are not all what we should like them to be, and as I have said already, they too are often covered with barnacles, but still they are all sincere. The Lord builds His vessels with sound timber and unless we are sincere and right, Christ is not our owner, but Satan is. The painted hypocrite is known through the disguise he wears.

There is another vessel over there, a fine vessel, too. Look, she is newly painted and looks spick and span. You can see nothing amiss with her. What white sails, and do you notice the many flags? Take the glass and read the vessel's name and you will see in bold letters, "Self-righteousness." Ah, I know that the owner is not the Lord Jesus Christ, for all the ships that belong to Him carry the red cross flag and cannot endure the flaunting rag of self-righteousness. All God's people own that they must be saved by sovereign grace, and anything like righteousness of their own, they pump overboard as so much leakage and bilge-water. I see another vessel over yonder, with her sails all spread and every bit of her colors flying. There, there, what a blaze she makes! How proud she seems as she scuds over the water. That vessel is "The Pride," from the port of Self-Conceit, Captain Ignorance. I do not know where she is more

often to be seen, but sometimes she crosses this bit of water. I should not wonder if she is in sight here now, and you may be sure she does not belong to our Lord Jesus. Whether it is pride of money, or person, or rank, or talent, it comes of evil, and Jesus Christ does not own it. You must get rid of all pride if you belong to Him. God grant us to be humble in heart. I could mention some more vessels that I see here tonight, but I will not. I will rather beg each man and woman to ask himself, "Can I put my hand on my heart and say, 'I am not my own, I am bought with a price?' Did Jesus buy me with His precious blood and do I acknowledge that there is not a timber, spar, rope, or bolt in me but what belongs to Him?" Blessed be His name, some of us can say there is not a hair of our head or a drop of our blood but what belongs to Him. Yours are we, You Son of David, and all that we have.

I hope there are vessels here which are owned by the Lord Jesus Christ. Let them never be ashamed to confess their Owner. A vessel on proper business is never ashamed to answer signals. If there should be a smuggler or pirate in the offing, the crews would not be likely to answer signals. But those who are on honest business are ready to reply. And so, brethren, be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. Never show in your actions that you are ashamed of Jesus, but always let the broad flag be flying in whatever waters you are—"Christ is mine, and I am His. For Him I live. His reproach would I bear and His honor would I maintain."

Our next inquiry is *what is your cargo*? "There go the ships," but what do they carry? You cannot tell from looking at them far out at sea, except that you can be pretty sure that some of them do not carry much. Look at that showy brig. You can tell by the look of her that she has not much on board—from the fact of her floating so high it is clear that her cargo is light. Big men, very important individuals, very high-floating people are common, but there is nothing in them. If they had more on board, they would not sink deeper in the water. As we said this morning, the more divine grace a man has the lower he lies before God. Well, brethren, what cargo have you got? I am afraid some of you who lie down in the water are not kept down by any very precious cargo, but I fear you are in ballast. I have gone aboard some Christians. I thought there was a good deal in them, but I have not been able to find it. They have a great deal of trouble and they always tell you about it. There is a good old soul I call in to see sometimes. I begin to converse with her and her conversation is always about rheumatism—nothing else. You cannot get beyond rheumatism. That good sister is in ballast. There is another friend of mine, a farmer. If you talk with him, it is always about the badness of the times. That brother is in ballast, too. There are many tradesmen who, though they are Christians, cannot be made to talk of anything but the present dullness of business. I wish they could get that ballast out and fill up with something better, for it is not worth carrying. You must have it, sometimes, I suppose, but it is infinitely better to carry a load of praises, prayers, good wishes, holy doctrines, charitable actions, and generous encouragements.

Some ships, I think, carry a cargo of *powder*. You cannot go very near them without feeling you are in danger—they are so very apt to misjudge and take offense. I wish that such persons were made to carry a red flag that we might give them a wide berth.

It is well to be loaded with good things. Young people, study the Word of God. Ask to be taught by experience and wherever you go, seek to carry the precious commodities which God has made dear to your own soul, that others may be enriched thereby. It is an interesting sight to see those immense ships loaded with passengers for the colonies. I cannot help praying as I look at them, "God grant that no harm may come to them, but may they safely reach their desired haven." When I look at some of our brethren whom God is blessing, so that they have a cargo of blessed souls on board, consisting of hundreds who have been brought to Jesus by them, I would to God we had many more. Thank God, I have sometimes had my decks crowded with passengers who have, from my ministry, received the gospel. The Lord has brought them on board, and O, I trust before I die He will give me thousands more who will have to thank God that they heard the gospel from these lips. May we be emigrant vessels bearing souls away into the glory land where the days of their mourning shall be ended. Of course we can only be humble instruments, but still, what honor God puts upon His instruments when He makes use of them for this object. "There go the ships." Not ships of war are we, with guns to carry death, but missionary vessels carrying tidings of peace and glad news to the utmost ends of the earth.

Our last signal asks the question—*where go the ships?* "Where go the ships? Oh, yes, they went merrily down the Channel the other day, but where are they now? In a year's time, who will report all the good vessels which just now passed by our coast? I am looking out upon all of you, anxious to know what port you are making for. Some of you are bound for the port of peace. Swiftly may the winds convey you over the waters and safely may you voyage under the convoy of the Lord Jesus. I will try and keep pace with you. I hope that you will sail in company with others of my Master's vessels, but if you have to sail alone over a sea in which you cannot see another sail, may God, the blessed One, protect and guard you. Bound for the port of peace, with Christ on board, insured for glory, bound for life eternal, let us bless the name of the Lord.

But alas, alas, many ships which bid fair for the desired haven are lost on the rocks. Some soul-destroying sin causes their swift destruction. Others, equally fair to look upon, are lost on the sands. They seemed bound for heaven, but they were not the Lord's. The sands are very dangerous, but they are only a mass of little atoms, soft and yielding, yet as many ships are lost on the sands as on the rocks. Even so, there are ways and habits of evil which are deceptive—there is apparently nothing very bad about them, nothing heartbreaking, like rocks, but oh, the multitudes of souls that have been sucked in by sandy temptations. Dear brethren, I hope you are not going that way. God grant you grace to avoid little sins and I am sure you will keep off the rocks of great sin. In any case, may we turn out to be the Lord's own, and so be kept to the end.

Woe unto us if we should prove to be mere adventurers and perish in our presumption.

Among the ships that go to sea, there are some that *founder*. One does not know how, but they are never heard of again. They were sighted on such-and-such a day, but nevermore shall we hear any tidings of them. How is that? I have known some of the members of this church go down in mid-ocean. I never thought it could have happened, but they have gone. I can only imagine how it was. They seemed seaworthy vessels, but they were doubtless rotten through and through. Oh brethren, may God keep you from foundering, as some do by some mysterious sin which seems as if it clasped the soul and dragged it down to the deeps of hell.

I have known some vessels, too, that have become *derelict*—waifs and strays upon the sea—men that were the hope of churches, but who have abandoned themselves to reckless living. They used to worship with the people of God and seemed to be very earnest and zealous. And now, perhaps, at this very moment, they are passing through the gin palace door, or spending this evening in vices which we dare not mention. O, it is dreadful. Many start on their voyage and look as if they were Christ's own vessels—and yet for some strange, unreasonable reason they give all up. And they will be met with, in years to come, drifting about, rudderless, captainless, crewless, dangerous to others and miserable to themselves. God save you from this, young man! And you, my friend, though you have been a member of this church for 20 years, God save you from despairing and sinning furiously, for there, sometimes, come over men strange moments of insanity in which they reverse the whole of their lives, lay violent hands upon an excellent character, and become castaways. The grace of God will save the truly regenerate from this, but alas, how many high professors never were regenerate at all!

Where will some of the vessels I see before me go? It is a fine fleet I am looking upon. Brothers and sisters, I hope all of us will be found in that great harbor in heaven which can accommodate all His Majesty's fleet. O, it will be a great day when we all arrive. Will you give me a hail when you get into port? Will you know me? I shall be on the lookout for some of you. I cannot help believing that we shall know each other. We have been in rough waters together these 20 years, and we have had some glorious weather too, have we not? We have seen the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. I hope we shall keep together till we reach that blessed haven where our fellowship will be eternal. How we will glorify Him who gets us there, even Jesus, the Lord High Admiral of the seas. Christ shall never hear the last of it if I get to heaven. *I will* sing, yes, I will sing praises unto His name. I remember preaching once, when half of my congregation quarreled with me when I had done preaching, for I had said—

"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing
While heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace."

As I came downstairs I met one who said, "You will not sing loudest, for I owe more to grace than you do." And I found that all the Lord's people said the same. Well, we will have it out when we get to heaven—we will

try this contention among the birds of paradise and see which of us can sing the most loudly to the praise of redeeming grace. Till then let us trust the Lord Jesus and obey His orders, for He is our Captain and it is our duty to do His bidding.

But it would be a dreadful supposition—and yet, perhaps, it may be worse than a supposition—that some of you will have to cast anchor forever in the Dead Sea, whose waves are fire, where every vessel is a prison, where every passenger feels a hell. What must it be like to be in hell an hour! I wish some of you could think it over. What must it be like to be shut up in despair for one single day! If you have a toothache a few minutes, how wretched you are and how anxious to get rid of it, but what must it be to be in hell, even if were for a short time—even it were *but* for a short time? Oh, if it came to an end, still would I say, by all the humanities that are in my soul, I charge you, brethren, do not risk the wrath of God. Go not down to the pit. Pull down that black flag, man, pull it down and cast off your old owner. Ask Christ to be your Owner. Run up the red flag of the cross and give yourself to Jesus, for if you do not, your voyage must lead to the gulf of black despair, where you will suffer forever the result of your sin. God have mercy upon us and may we never have to pass through the straits of judgment into the gulf of damnation. May it never be said, "There goes one of the ships that the Tabernacle pilot signaled. It is gone to destruction." May it rather be said of all of us, all in full sail together, as we go towards heaven, "There go the ships." Not one of them is drifting to the gulf of destruction. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and all is well with you. Reject Him, and all is ill with you. May He by His Word enable you to make a right choice tonight, for His love's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 104.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—551, 686, 656.

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THE UNBROKEN LINE OF TRUE NOBLES
NO. 1260

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 17, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom you may make princes in all the earth."
Psalm 45:16.

WERE you ever perplexed by being drawn with almost equal force in two directions? I have been so. There is a bond which reaches from the cemetery which holds me very fast and therefore I desired again this morning to have made use of the solemn visitation which so suddenly removed one of our friends from us. But this is the beginning of the week set apart for prayer for the young, and I have felt duty bound to take a part in the celebration and to assist to stir up Sunday school teachers and the members of the church in general to pray for the blessing of God upon the rising generation. Now these mourning friends expect a consoling word from me—and these children demand that I plead for them also! I realized the scene in my study. What was I to do? Between two subjects I might arrive at none and that was not a desirable conclusion. I watched, looked, and prayed, and at last I resolved to yield myself to both influences, and I have as nearly as possible done so by selecting this text—"Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom you may make princes in all the earth."

The text begins with, "*Instead*." It is a sad word. I do not enjoy the sound of it. "*In stead*"—well, then, we must expect to lose some if others are to come in their stead. Alas, these funerals will be repeated, new graves must be dug! New friends will arise, but we dread the exchange. Would it not be more pleasant to keep the old workers? Would it not be safer to have the same comrades in the day of battle? What a grand Old Guard the veterans would make! *"Instead"!* It is a prophecy that some must go that others may come. That some must decay, that others may flourish. That some must die that others may succeed them. Our trembling faith hardly likes the change here hinted at, for we are apt to think that those who are to stand "instead" will be very slow in coming. Where are we to find men to fill the vacant places? By whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small? Indeed, there are some saints so eminently blessed of God that we ask ourselves the question, "Who can stand in their stead?" Moses! May Moses live forever, for who but he can rule and guide so great a multitude and with mingled meekness and authority, conduct so great an army through the wilderness? Who but he can have such power with God as to stand between Israel and the divine anger? We hear a whisper of Joshua as his successor, but good as Joshua may be, we can hardly endure to see the leadership change hands. And Elijah too, that

bold iron prophet, that man of fire and thunder. "I only," said he, "am left." Shall we lose him? From where shall there come another? No, if it pleases the Lord, we would rather keep Elijah. We do not like that word, "instead," even though we hear that there is an Elisha to follow Elijah. Too frequent is the fear that the one who comes instead will be a poor substitute and succeed only in name. After high hills come deep valleys, the second crop seldom equals the first, and so great grace and ability seldom continue long either in a family or in an office. We know that Solomon died and was succeeded by Rehoboam—a wise man by a fool. We know also that Eli, good man and true priest of God, had most ungodly Phineas to succeed him; we would, therefore, keep Eli, if possible, and see Solomon forever on the throne, but it cannot be so, and therefore it is of no use our sitting down idly to fret over the future and lament the past. All our sorrow over changes caused by the mortality of our race will not alter it, for God has ordained that one must depart and another come in his stead.

But, listen, I think that the word *instead*, if we listen to it with another ear, will sound out a note of gladness. If one falls, there is another to fill up the gap in our ranks. Comrades, is not this good news? If one laborer is taken from the vineyard, there is still a man in reserve to supply his place—does not this cheer you? We are encouraged by the belief that when the Lord supplants one set of servants by others He does not, after all, diminish the display of His love and grace and power. No, rather He shows His independence of any one company of men and His power to use whom He pleases. After all He puts the same spirit upon the newcomers and the power remains the same though the weapon wielded differs. Sometimes the change is manifestly for good. Eli was followed by Samuel, a great improvement upon Eli after all. We remember too that Moses, albeit there was never a man born of woman greater than he, was yet followed by a hero more fitted for the new phase of Israel's history than Moses would have been. I can hardly conceive of Moses, sword in hand, slaying Canaanites at his advanced age. That was fitter work for Joshua and though, in some respects, Joshua was an inferior man to Moses, yet he was more suitable for his times and more adapted for the peculiar work which the armies of the living God had to do. Courage, my brethren, our sons may be superior to ourselves! There is room for it and let us hope they will be. Our sons, at any rate, may be fitter for the work which they will have to do than we should be if our lives could be extended into another age. I doubt not, we may say without personal vanity that we have been better men for this age than our grandsires would have been had their lives been protracted into this present time—and so shall our children and grandchildren go beyond us, if the Lord enable them—in fulfilling the growing demands of the ripening ages. God knows best and when He puts one man instead of another, I have no doubt that His infinite wisdom perceives that there is abundant cause for the change. For life to display fresh developments instead of the old, is the law both of nature and of grace—whether we are glad or sad, it must be so, therefore let us accept the divine arrangement and act accordingly.

To help us in this matter, let us consider the promise before us—"Instead of your fathers shall be your children." This may be viewed in a light which will reveal *its gracious recompense.* Secondly, we shall regard *its eminent fulfillment*. Thirdly, we shall look at *its happy encouragement*, for it has a very bright side. And fourthly, we shall remember *its practical requirements*. Into this last, we shall throw our strength in the hope that, by the divine blessing, holy effort for the coming generation may be aroused.

I. First, in the promise of our text let us observe ITS GRACIOUS RECOMPENSE.

I read you the psalm just now. Now, in this sweet song you noticed that the bride is commanded to forget her own people and her father's house. Very naturally this would be painful to her and therefore the rest of the psalm is occupied with cheering her by a sight of the recompenses which she may expect. Instead of your fathers, whom you, O bride of Christ are to forget and to forsake, shall be your children, equally dear to you, who shall occupy that place in your heart which has been left empty by your forgetting your father's house. Do you not see that her husband's heart is so full of love to her that while he takes her right away from old connections and makes it a condition of his desiring her beauty, that all these shall be forgotten? Yet he assures her that new associations shall be formed which shall yield more than equal solace to her. "Instead of your fathers shall be your children." The practical lesson is this—many Christians, when they are converted to God, are members of irreligious families—and from the moment of their conversion they cease to have any real heart-fellowship with their relatives, who in many cases treat them unkindly and give them the cold shoulder or worse. Dwelling with them after the flesh, they have to come out from among them after the Spirit and be separate, and no longer touch the unclean thing. However kindly disposed they may be, and grace will make them more so and induce in them a double affection to their kin, yet they feel that the possession of grace by them, and the non-possession of it by their friends, sets a great gulf between them. Let them not lament nor sigh, though their foes should be the men of their own household, for there are abundant recompenses available. You are to be introduced, my friend, into another household and you are there to form other acquaintances and other intimate connections, for to you shall be fulfilled the promise of the Savior, "No man has left father or mother or children that shall not receive in this life a hundredfold, and in the world to come life everlasting." Do not look back to those evil companionships and ensnaring loves. Forget the fleshpots of Egypt and the associations of Goshen. Let them go, they will do you no good. And now throw yourself into the work of Christ. In the converts whom you shall lead to Jesus, in the desponding saints whom you shall cheer, in the disciples whom you shall instruct and in the brotherhood of which you shall become a member—you will find ample room for all the affections of your soul, till you shall be able to say of the church of God—

"My soul shall pray for Zion still,

While life or breath remains,
There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Savior reigns."

The law of recompense works also in another quarter and comes in to compensate for the separations caused by death. As the fathers die, one after another, those of like years feel that they are left almost alone. To them, then, shall it be true, "Instead of your fathers shall be your children." Do not give way to idle regrets and say, "All who joined the church with me are gone, all those who were the companions of my manhood are now taken away. I am left alone and the cause is weakened." No, my brethren, keep your hearts young and make yourselves indispensable to the young people around you. The old soldier must let his heart go out towards the recruits and he must make friends of the young warriors. Instead of lamenting that you are lonely, as I have known some do, and looking down upon everything that is of the present time as though it could not possibly be so good as in your own days, throw yourself into the present, project yourself into the future, and love the children for the fathers' sake. I know when I was much younger than I am now, I used to think the men in office were such marvelous saints, but then I did not mix with them, I only looked up to them from a distance. At prayer meetings and communions, I thought there never were such excellent people in the world as those pillars of the church. Somebody said to me the other day that he did not meet with such good old men now as we used to know in our youth, and I told him that the men were quite as good, but we were in among them and therefore had less of the superstitious awe of our youth. And I added that I was myself surprised to find them as good as they now are since our view of them is so much nearer and so much more daring. No prophet has honor in his own country, nor among men of his own age. Distance lends enchantment in many cases. We have as good men among us now as ever lived, but we know more about them than of those who have departed, and we criticize them more severely. We are, none of us, able to fully compare the past generations with this present one, because we were not in those generations as we are in this. Men at a great distance may appear to be absolutely perfect, but when we get close to them, spots are manifest and our judgement changes. Never let us fall into that silly state of mind in which we say, "The dear good men are all gone. The faithful are all dead." There are dear good men still alive and there are more coming. Do not let us fear that the Almighty will run short of servants. Let us not dream that He with whom is the residue of the Spirit will allow His cause to droop for lack of qualified ministers, elders, deacons, or other workers. On the contrary, let us say, "Bless the Lord, whose mercy endures forever." We have learned that instead of the fathers shall be the children. And we will take as much delight in the young saints who are growing up as in former years we took in those mature, judicious, well-instructed saints whom the Lord, our heavenly Father, has taken home. Let this suffice to show that the text promises recompense.

II. Secondly, let us view our text historically in ITS EMINENT FULFILMENT. Brethren, all along since God ever had a people in the world, there have been changes. In God's garden, as in ours, plants of this year have been succeeded by those of the next. "As the days of a tree are the days of My people, says the Lord." As soon as the leaf is formed in the spring, if you watch it, there is a new leaf beneath it for the next spring. This year's leaf opened gradually, grew, came to perfection, and then it began to decay. And there is now on the branch a new leaf-bud which is pushing it off and that is what our sons are doing with us. We must drop off from the tree of mortal existence and it is right we should—and we need not complain—for God has provided some better things for us. It has been the law in the world and the law in the church that one set of laborers should follow the other, and they have done so without fail. It is with the church as with the sea—each wave dies, but there is another wave behind it. Sometimes the wave appears to retreat rather than advance, but frequently the next wave rolls up gloriously. So must it always be and we must not despair that the waves die, for the sea does not die and the tide is still advancing. You may, perhaps, have seen an olive tree in growth. I have studied it carefully, for it has the charm of Gethsemane about it. It looks like an embodiment of sorrow and fruitfulness. An olive is twisted like a thousand snakes. It seems as if in an agony, yet it has cheerfulness about it too, for when the tree grows old the young shoots spring up from its roots, keeping it always young. I have no doubt it is to this that the psalmist refers when he says, "Your children round your table like olive plants." The shoots spring up around the old olive and so it lives again. And when these die, fresh shoots appear and the tree still brings forth fruit in old age. The church of God never dies, for when one after another we finish our course, others spring out of the ever-living root and so the blessed succession of grace is kept up in the world.

Now, look back a moment. That was a grand age when patriarchs walked through the earth, when Abraham and Isaac and Jacob towered above the sons of men. They died, and the church was in captivity in Egypt, downtrodden and afflicted, yet were there among them those who sighed and cried unto the Lord, and therefore He looked down upon the tribes with pitying eyes. Then there came great rulers like Moses and Joshua to deliver the chosen seed—and when these departed, the judges were raised up. Time would fail us to tell of Gideon, Barak and Samson, who each one in his turn delivered Israel. When the judges passed away, God exalted the man after his own heart to lead His people and the kings ruled in righteousness. When these turned aside, the light of Israel was not quenched, for the prophets bore witness and when the lamp of prophecy burned dim, there were confessors who, all through the period between the Old and the New Testament, still remained faithful to the commands of God. Then blazed forth the light of our Lord Jesus and His apostles, and before the last apostle had been taken away, the martyr flames lit up the world. When persecution had ceased and heathenism had conquered Christianity by debasing her doctrines, the Reformers shone out with their gracious brilliance and these have been succeeded

constantly by evangelists, one after the other, who have moved the people and maintained, through the divine Spirit, the gospel testimony to this day. Brethren, I believe that the history of the church in modern times is like that of olden times. The apostles were our patriarchs, the Reformers were our Moses and Joshua, and the great preachers since have been as judges. And now we look for the King Himself, even He that shall sit upon the throne of David and shall reign forever and ever. View history as you will, there is continuity in it. In the darkest times, there has shone forth some bright, particular star, yes, and in secret places, in holy hearts and gracious families, there has remained more of the divine life and light than the pages of historians have recorded. There has always been a remnant according to the election of grace. When the church moaned and said, "God has forsaken me, my God has forgotten me. The fathers, where are they?" God has not forsaken her—He has kept for Himself His thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal. And there has arisen a leader just in the nick of time to seize the banner and to rally the wavering host, for as God lives and the Spirit still abides in the church, and Jesus is with us always, even to the world's end, the succession of grace shall never cease. Glory be to the name of the Most High.

III. Thirdly, having seen, concerning our text, its eminent fulfillment, let us for a second or so view it in ITS HAPPY ENCOURAGEMENT.

Brethren, God's promise is the ultimate hope of the Christian and of the church at large, and here we have it—"Instead of your fathers *shall be* your children." Lean on the divine *shall*, for it is as sure as the eternal covenant. As you have to leave the ark of the Lord behind you and you can no longer carry it upon your shoulder, God will provide successors. "Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide." You have believed that word in reference to your family and your own livelihood—believe it in reference to God's family and His cause. God has provided already for Himself a Lamb for His Passover—you may depend upon it, He will provide what is a vastly smaller thing—a line of men who shall ever keep that Passover Lamb before the eyes of His people. We are sure, O Lord, that You will do as You have said—

"Fathers to sons shall teach Your name,
And children learn Your ways;
Ages to come Your truth proclaim,
And nations sound Your praise."

Do not give way to distrust about the present or the future, for Jesus lives and walks among the golden candlesticks, trimming all the lamps and shining through them. The stars are in His right hand, by Him kindled and by Him renewed with immortal flame. You have the Spirit of God still dwelling in the church to call whomever Jesus wills and to anoint them with holy oil that they may go forth in the Master's name. My brethren, to have doubt about this would be unpardonable because we are coming towards an epoch where all the promises declare a victory. Do they not all travail with a glorious day of grace? We are bound to exert ourselves for the spread of the gospel, for we know that Christ must have the pre-eminence everywhere. "As truly as I live, says the Lord, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." We have received the

Word from God's mouth, "He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet." We are not taking a leap into the dark. We are not "shooting Niagara"—we are marching into light—the day has broken, the shadows are fleeing, the brightness is increasing, the noontide is at hand and perhaps, before this century ends, we may have passed into the supreme brilliance of that millennial period in which Christ Jesus shall reign gloriously among His ancients. If He bids us wait and wait we may, we would cheerfully march on, for our faces are to the sunrise and every hour brings glory nearer. At any rate, in such an hour as we think not, behold, the Bridegroom comes. And when He comes, our victory has come with Him. Let us not yield to despondency. If the line of battle wavers, or our ranks are broken by the enemy, remember the reserves, the grand reserves which our Captain is holding back. And remember the King Himself is coming who never fights but to conquer. He, whose presence means triumph, is on His way. Mark the signal and "Hold the fort, for He is coming," whose coming shall close your warfare and commence your triumph.

IV. I must now come to view the text, as to ITS PRACTICAL REQUIREMENTS. "Instead of your fathers shall be your children."

Well then, *if we stand instead of our fathers, what manner of persons ought we to be*? I will not call to mind your immediate sires, though it were no dishonor to many of you if I did so. I will not recount the family ancestry with which God has blessed us. No imperial blood is in our veins nor blue blood of nobility. Descended from the King of kings, each saint possesses a nobler pedigree than earthly princes. To be the child of godly parents is one of the greatest honors in the world. But I ask you to look back to your spiritual ancestry, your fathers after the spirit, your predecessors in the faith of the Lord Jesus. Oh, my brethren, what manner of people ought we to be, who as Christian men and women have succeeded the heritage of martyrs? Who have taken up a cause pleaded by apostolic lips? Who have followed upon men of whom the world was not worthy? Our ancestors were made what they were by the grace of God and the church of God may well glorify God in them. Their sufferings and heroic fortitude, their labors and their dauntless courage have left us under solemn obligations. Shall we be coward sons of heroic sires? Shall we be sluggards and slovenly in a work which they carried out so well? They built with gold, silver, and precious stones—shall we degrade their work by heaping thereon wood, hay, and stubble? I charge you, brethren, take good heed unto your ways by the remembrance of where you came. Thus would I speak to all believers, for the church is one and indivisible. Each tribe of the one seed has its own history and I leave my brethren of various denominations to speak to their own. I will now address myself especially to those who are known as Baptists. As for us, the baptized followers of Christ, our ancestry as a body of Christian men is not to be despised. Albeit that the name of Anabaptist has been made the football of reproach because it was wrongfully associated with fanatical opinions, we may rest assured that the more history is understood, the more apparent will it be that those who were the most humiliated were thus

treated because they were before their times. They bore the brunt of battle because they led the way. God forbid that I should induce you to glory in them and so to wear borrowed laurels. Of all pride, I think that to be the most idle which hides its own nakedness beneath the tattered banners of ancestry. I do but dwell for a moment upon our past history to excite you to yet more earnest deeds. Prove yourselves to be these men's sons by doing their deeds. Otherwise you are bastards and not sons.

In every effort for civil and religious liberty, our fathers were at the front. In the utterance of those divine truths which have made tyrants and priests quake for fear, they have been among the boldest. Our fathers, for holding to baptism as the Lord ordained it, suffered at the hands of men who knew no mercy. Their beliefs were misrepresented and themselves regarded as monsters rather than men. In this country they were, in the matter of time, both first and last at the stake. On this very spot where you now sit, long before there were any Lutherans or Calvinists, we read that, "Three Anabaptists were burnt at the Butts at Newington." Our sires were Protestants before the Protestants. They were part of a long line of men who stood firm when the mass of the church turned this way and that. They were, in fact, the most bold and thoroughgoing of all the adherents of the apostolic and scriptural church and therefore they were persecuted by prelates and abhorred by priests. When I hear Ritualists talking of their ancient church, I blush to think that Englishmen should claim kinship with the Roman Antichrist, whose yoke our fathers tore from off their necks. The pedigree of every Anglican priest must, of necessity, have flowed through the Dead Sea of Popery. Our limpid streamlet runs not through that slough of filthiness, but comes down pure from earliest ages. Our doctrines and ordinances remain as they were delivered unto us by our Lord. Neither have we desired to add the traditions of men to them. "Hold fast, therefore, your confidence which has great recompense of reward." Do not give up your principles, my brethren, for the church and the world will need them. Nobody can fight the battle against sacramentarianism like the man who puts the ordinances in their Scriptural position as belonging to believers and to believers only. As long as baptism is given to those who are unregenerate, the figment of baptismal regeneration will find a foothold. We must unflinchingly keep to our testimony that religion is a personal thing and that only those who have faith in Jesus can partake in the privileges of His house. Birthright membership and vows of sponsors must alike be the subjects of our protest. By your sires who were drowned by the hundreds for refusing homage to a superstitious rite, men who neither feared Luther nor the Pope, and were hated of all men and even by Reformers because they occupied a standpoint still bolder, clearer, and more advanced than all others, I beseech you, brethren, hold fast your Christian liberty and never cease to testify to all the truth which God has taught you. May our brethren who differ from us, come to us in this matter, for we cannot go to them—we are spellbound by the plain teaching of Scripture and dare not move so much as a hair's breadth. May the Lord yet give to all His saints to know the "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism."

If we are instead of our fathers, let us endeavor to continue their testimony undiminished in force and untarnished in clearness. Our brethren of other denominations must bear their testimony to what truth they know and we are the last to deny them this liberty or to despise their cooperation. But, after all, our own duty is that which we must look to—that we may be found faithful "in that day."

The next practical point is this—*if others are to come instead of us, what are we doing for them*? Looking at ourselves as occupying the present time, how far are we good links between the present and the future? Others are to come instead of us—are we taking care as much as lies in us that those who come in the place of us shall be fit men to maintain the interests of God's truth? Oh, brethren, let us, as a church, love the young. Let us labor, by God's grace, to gather in a multitude of young converts. Let us pray God to bless our schools of every sort and the teaching among the rising youth, as far as that teaching is according to His mind and will. A church which does not believe in the conversion of children, a church that, in fact, scarcely believes in the conversion of anybody, is likely to die out. But a church that lives for converts, even as parents live for their children, will be the joyous mother of a numerous progeny and become stronger and stronger.

I would to God we were all stirred up, not merely the teachers in the school, but all of us, to seek the conversion of the young and to aim by every means in our power to set God's truth before them and lead them in His way.

The church ought to look to the tuition, the training, and the culture of her children. All those who are brought to Christ in youth should be peculiarly watched over by us. It is said that Alexander gathered together his valiant army principally through training children from their very birth to the pursuits of war. He took little children as soon as they could run alone and placed them in a camp where their playthings were swords and their amusements were found among armor, spears, and shields. These born soldiers grew up knowing of nothing and caring for nothing but for Alexander, Macedon, and fighting. Thus would we, by God's grace, train our sons to live alone for Christ, His truth and the souls whom He has redeemed; O that our sons might be men of war from their youth for Jesus! We need workers who have been in the vineyard from the first hour of the day—these are the backbone of successful Christian husbandry. There is necessity for far more attention to training and Christian edification than has, until this time, been usual—and the sooner this is felt, the better. We need men whose earliest feats of mental strength are shown in the gymnasium of the church, young athletes trained for war, ready for exploits, and waiting to take their place in the Lord's battles at their fathers' side. We shall have a grand era when the church learns to train her youth in holy enterprises and to employ them early for the Lord.

We know, too, that if we are to have good successors, our young friends must acquire a noble carriage from their childhood. That is a great word—"whom you may make princes in all the earth," and we must

not be content to come short of it. What? Make our young converts princes! Yes, so says the text—and it is to be done, by God's grace, if they are imbued with heavenly principles by the Holy Spirit—and if we set before them the example of our princely Savior and if each one of us shall try to make his own life right royal in dignity of purpose and aim. The nobility of the text is of a rare sort—"princes in all the earth." Why, a man may be a prince in his own country, and have no power out of it—but a man of high Christian character is a prince in all the earth and we would have all our children such. That ancient schoolmaster, Jacob Treboniue, whenever he went into his school, was accustomed to take off his hat to his boys. When asked why he did so, he replied, "Because, sir, I do not know what learned doctors and great men I may be teaching." He was quite right, for Martin Luther was one of the boys in his school and I would have taken off my hat to Martin Luther if I had been his schoolmaster. I perhaps would have chastised him as well, but taken off my hat, at any rate, out of respect to the man concealed in such a boy. Who knows but among those whom we teach for Jesus, right royal spirits may be concealed? And it is ours to try, by the grace of God, to train those choice spirits that they may be yet more noble. I have read a story which shows how poor, ragged children may be nobles. A minister was once called in to examine a school. The master said to him, "Question the boys all through the Catechism, for they know it thoroughly." "But," he said, "do you think they understand it?" The schoolmaster smiled and bowed his head in assent. "Try them, sir." The minister asked one of the shoeless little boys to repeat the commandment, "Honor your father and your mother," and he did so promptly. "Do you understand it, my lad?" said the minister. "Yes, sir, I think I do." "What does it mean?" "Well, sir, last week I went over the mountain with some gentlemen to show them the way and I had no shoes. And the stones were so sharp that they made my feet bleed and the gentlemen gave me some money to buy a pair of shoes. When I went home I recollected that mother needed shoes, too, and so I gave her the money to buy a pair for herself." That lad was surely one of the princes in all the earth. And if children, by the grace of God, are taught to do the same and if we ourselves shall each one cultivate a noble spirit of unselfish love, we shall give proof that the Holy Spirit has made us princes in all the earth. Oh, brethren, when I think of what the church of God can do for her young converts when God helps her, I am amazed and full of delight. She is a mother whose sons are, each one, born in king's palaces and each one joint heirs with the Prince Emanuel. All her children shall be taught of the Lord and great shall be their peace.

To make a man a prince you ought to give him not only a noble carriage but a rich endowment. He will be wretched unless he has some means with which to exercise the liberality which dwells in his heart. If I were addressing the young man who has lately been converted, I would say, "My son, take this Bible in your hands. It is the church's best treasure and you will be a prince if you will make it your own by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Here is an endowment for you which shall make you

richer than Croesus of old. "Give to your children the gospel, the glorious doctrines of grace. Give to them the precepts of Christ and the blessed inspiring example which He has left behind Him. Give them a hallowed example in your own life and you have done infinitely more for them than if you had left them an annual income to be measured by millions. You shall make them princes in all the earth if by God's grace you lead them to Jesus, and He endows them with the Spirit of all grace, so that they are rich in faith and zealous for good works." I was so glad last Monday that I do not know whenever I have been gladder—there were two young sisters and two young brothers of this church, two of them connected with this Sunday school, who were going abroad as missionaries. The Prince of Wales set out on his journey on Monday and so did two princes and two princesses out of this church. I felt more confidence in sending my princes out, I am bound to say, than the Royal mother did in sending her son. Perhaps in the last day of account, India will have more to say of our princes than even of our future king. It is a grand thing for a church to have missionaries bred and born in her. We aspire to it and already the blessing is coming. Young men, young women, in the Tabernacle, we are looking for more of you to be our princes in all the earth. We have some in India, we have some in Spain, we have some in other lands who are preaching Christ, but we want to have princes in all the earth. I shall never be completely satisfied till, looking over a map, I shall recollect, "Brother So-and-so is *there.* Sister So-and-so is *there* turning the heathen to Christ and conquering the land for Jesus." To the utmost bounds of the habitable globe may a princely offspring go forth from all the churches of the living God, and may we take our full share of the blessed privilege.

The last word is this—looking to my young friends who may be present this morning, as I have already looked back to our sires and down upon ourselves, I say to them, *are you prepared to take your fathers' places*? It was with great joy that, at the cemetery last Friday, when I buried my beloved brother Henry Olney, I saw so many of our young men present. The hope of the church—honorable men, too—I believe worthy to succeed their sires. I thanked God and I took courage as I came out of the cemetery gate as I saw many of them walking together in Christian brotherhood. Younger brethren, I trust you will be worthy of your sires, even if you do not excel them. I beseech you, since you are the church's hope, do not disappoint us! Young men and young women, consecrate yourselves early to God and let it be thorough, out-and-out consecration—you will never regret it. There sits behind me a brother who could tell you, if he were well enough, how his early days were happy in his Master's service and how, now, when he speaks with somewhat trembling accents, his heart rejoices in the Lord whom he has loved so long. Young men, follow in his footsteps. Young women, be you, also, fully devoted to Christ.

By way of warning, I must add, let none of you suppose that because you come of pious parents you will be saved. Remember Abraham had for his son an Ishmael. The line does not run according to blood and natural descent, but according to the will of God. Alas, there are some,

too—I met one the other day, I feel the arrow in my heart at this moment—there are some who utterly forsake the Lord God of their fathers and turn aside to skepticism and sin. When a young man glories in infidelity and chooses for his companions loose fellows of the baser sort, his descent from saintly fathers will bring upon him sevenfold guilt. It were better for him that he had never been born, than leave an ancestry which God has blessed, to turn aside to be an enemy of the cross of Christ. Perhaps someone may say, "Ah, but Ishmael had not a good mother—she was Hagar, the bondwoman." My solemn answer is—Esau had the same mother as Jacob and was born at the same birth—yet Esau shared not in spiritual privileges as Jacob did. Trust not in your descent. Rely not upon a mother's tears or a father's piety. Seek the Lord, my sons, my daughters, or you will not taste His love. "My son, give Me your heart," says Jesus—not your father's heart, but your own. Yield yourselves as living sacrifices unto God and then, instead of the fathers shall be the children.

I stand among you like an officer in the midst of his regiment and as one and another falls, I entreat you to close up your ranks. My brethren, my children, do not permit the good cause at the Tabernacle to fail. You will not, I am sure. I am persuaded better things of you though I thus speak. Whoever dies, stand ready, you younger men, to take their places. As you get older, ask for more grace to qualify you, not merely to be private members, but to be leaders among us, that to this church may be fulfilled forevermore the promise of the text, "Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom you may make princes in all the earth." God bless you, my beloved companions in the army of the Lord, young and old, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 45.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—45, 422, 145.

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SOW TO YOURSELVES
NO. 1261

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 24, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy."
Hosea 10:12.

FARMERS are now devoting their attention to putting seed into the ground. They know right well that without sowing in the present they cannot expect a reaping in the future. Seedtime has many lessons. That which we shall learn this morning is very personal and practical. Our hearts are like a field and if we let them alone the only crop we shall get will be the natural weeds of the soil together with those tares which the evil spirit is quite sure to scatter whether we sow good seed or not. We are to sow beside all waters, but we must not neglect to sow *to ourselves*. There is need that we sow good seed in our own gardens, or else it will little avail us to have planted and watered others. It is concerning this sowing of the home farm, this seeding of our own peculiar acre that I shall now speak. May the Spirit of God bless the word.

Before I launch into the subject, it may be well to observe that it does not apply to unrenewed hearts. It is in vain to sow unto yourselves till the soil has been prepared by our Father, who is the Husbandman. Even Christ's own seed of the Word, pure from His own hands, brings forth no fruit when it falls on unprepared hearts. His ministers are bound to scatter the seed in all places—on the hard rocks, on the highways and among thorns—but still no harvest ever comes till the soil is broken up and made receptive of truth, by the Spirit of God. Our text stands in the midst of a number of agricultural similes and it is preceded by that of plowing. "I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods." Without plowing, what is the use of sowing? Some soils need plowing and cross plowing—they are so heavy by nature that in them the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and only by mighty ripping of the soil are they saved. Have you ever had a broken heart, dear hearer? Did the Spirit of God ever drive the black horses of the law across your heart with the sharp plow of condemnation, killing your false hopes, wounding your spirit, and revealing your secret sins? If you have not known something about this, I cannot tell you to sow to yourself in righteousness. You are not prepared for that step—you must first be plowed. I pray the divine Spirit to operate upon your heart to the breaking up of your fallow ground that you sow not among thorns.

Let us also add another statement, lest we should be misunderstood. Even when we speak to the people of God and bid them, "Sow to themselves in righteousness," we, by no means forget that all true culture of the heart comes of the Spirit of God. We exhort men as the Scriptures do,

as active, intelligent beings. We exhort them as much as if there were no Holy Spirit, but we also pray to the Holy Spirit to make our exhortations, the efforts of His servants, effectual for the designed end. Without His divine operations, neither the precept of our text, nor any other, will be obeyed. In this, as well as in every matter connected with the gospel, grace reigns. If the first sentence of the text might seem to breathe legality, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness," yet the second clause of it most effectually evangelizes it, for it says, "Reap in mercy." Unless we reap eternal wrath, we must reap in mercy. If anything comes of what we do—if our prayerful anxiety and earnest faith as to the condition of our heart shall be really productive of holiness—it will be the result of infinite mercy and the effect of the Spirit's energy. Even the desire to be right before God arises from the operation of the Spirit of God. All the righteousness which is found in us comes by divine power and is not of ourselves, but like the whole of salvation, it is the gift of God. So, while I exhort, entreat, and persuade, I am not forgetful of the Divine One without whose gracious working we can do nothing at all.

We will now draw near to the text. First, my brethren, *we must not neglect seedtime* and secondly, *we must not neglect harvest when it comes*.

I. WE MUST NOT NEGLECT SEEDTIME. "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest shall not cease." Both are necessary and therefore God has decreed that time for both shall be given to men. All life is, in some respects, a sowing. All that we think, say, do, or leave undone is a sowing for the harvest of the last great day. And if we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap what always comes of the flesh, namely, corruption. But if we sow to the spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap what is congruous to the spirit, namely, life everlasting. As a man sows, so shall he reap; it is not, however, upon that form of sowing and reaping that I am going to speak to you this morning. As I have already told you, we shall deal with the inner life, for I think the connection shows that this is what was meant, for the prophet is evidently dealing with the people themselves and their condition of heart before God. The outward sowing of righteous actions in the field of the world is, doubtless, very important, but none the less so is the secret sowing of the enclosed garden of the heart. Our subject will be just this—that after we have been plowed by conversion, we need to take great care that our spiritual culture commences and is carried on. The little spot enclosed by grace out of the world's wide wilderness now calls for our attention and claims the holy skill and industry necessary to spiritual husbandry. It must be sown with the good seed of the Word of God, even the precious truths of Scripture, that from its soil there may be produced a harvest which shall be garnered with abounding joy and bring glory to God. The first thing after conversion to Christ is confession of Christ. And the next is instruction in Christ. I fear that too many professed converts leap over these hedges and endeavor to become teachers at once. Without joining themselves to the church of Christ, or becoming disciples in His school, they rush to the front, endeavoring to teach before they have been taught—and if they are the least checked, they resent it as an interference and cast suspi-

cion upon the zeal of their advisers. They call themselves disciples and repudiate all discipline. They say they are soldiers of the cross, but they can neither march in line nor keep step and neither will they submit themselves to order. They appear to think that the moment they are born, they are fathers. The instant they are enlisted, they are officers. Now, conversion is the beginning of the spiritual life—not the climax of it. It makes a man a disciple and the main thing a disciple has to do is to learn. After he has learned, he will be able to teach others also, but not till then. I have often said to you that nothing can come out of you that is not in you—and therefore if there is not something put into you to begin with, you may go out to war, but as you have neither shot nor powder in your gun, the enemy will not be much injured by your valor. We must be filled before we can run over. It is necessary for the Christian man to be prepared for holy service—in fact, what he does for God should be a harvest growing out of himself—because of a previous seedtime during which much precious seed was put into him.

Let us take note upon this sowing and ask, first, *what shall we sow*? Here is our heart, a plowed field, ready to receive the seed. What shall we sow? I answer, see to it, my brethren, that there is sown in you a real faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let it be of the simplest and most childlike kind. Do not trouble yourselves with definitions which darken counsel by words without knowledge. Hold on to Christ as a babe clings to its mother with its arms around her neck. Trust Him, depend upon Him, rest in Him and in Him alone. Mind that your faith is real reliance on Jesus, for I meet with some who think that faith is to believe that you are saved, but if indeed you are not saved, such faith will be a lie and you will entangle yourselves in the net of false confidence. Others think that faith is to believe that Christ died for them, when at the same time they think that He died for everybody, and then of course He died for them. Surely there can be no particular virtue or power in believing what is a self-evident inference. Many believe that Christ died for them and yet they are not saved. To believe savingly is to trust Christ—see that you have this trust sown in you. You ought to know why you trust Him and what He did for you, and in what relationship He stands towards you and God. You should be able, not merely to sing about His blood, but to know the doctrine of atonement—to grasp the blessed fact of His substitution—and know the reconciliation thereby effected. To know whom you have believed should be one of the chief objectives of your life. I am afraid that some who profess to have been converted do not even know the A B C of the gospel, namely, what is the faith of God's elect and on what does it rest? Take heed to yourselves that you are not ignorant here, but let your heart be well sown with simple reliance upon the eternal Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Sow to yourselves and see that in your soul there is repentance of sin. Do not fall under the notion that the necessity for repentance is over. I have heard it said that repentance is "merely a change of mind." I wish that those who so speak had undergone that change. It is a sad sign of a faulty ministry when men can depreciate that precious grace of God.

Mark you, no sinner will enter into heaven who has not repented of his sins. No promise can be found in the inspired pages of eternal life to men who live and die without repentance. It is an old-fashioned virtue, I know, but it is in fashion with the angels who rejoice over sinners who possess it. Know, my dear young friends, that sin is an evil and a bitter thing—and the language to be used about it is such as David employed in the 51st Psalm. Pray to God to convince you of your guilt and ask Him to enable you to flee from every false way. Seek grace to detect sin and as soon as ever you discern its presence, to fly from it as you would from a deadly serpent. May there be worked in you an inward abhorrence of sin, and a loathing of yourself because of your tendency to transgress. "You that love the Lord hate evil." "Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." May you also have a full conviction that in you, that is, in your flesh, there dwells no good thing—that your nature is empty, void, and waste, like the chaos of old—except as the blessed Spirit shall brood over you and the everlasting God shall create you new. There needs to be in your soul a deep sense of its ruin or you will not prize redemption, and much of the godly sorrow of repentance, or you will not know the ecstasy of forgiveness. O for a plentiful sowing in tears that we may reap in joy.

Labor, also, to have sown in you a clear knowledge of the gospel. Do not be satisfied to see men as trees walking, but ask for the eyes cleansed, even of the smallest mote. Be thankful if you have only a little sight, but let your gratitude lead you to pray for the removal of every scale. If you are really to bring forth a harvest of wheat without tares, you must distinguish between things that defer, for a man's belief affects his life more than some imagine. You ought to know the plan of redemption, the system upon which God grants salvation. It will be a great advantage for you to understand the two covenants and to see plainly the distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. He who is clear upon that matter has grasped the marrow of theology and possesses the clue to the precious gospel of Jesus Christ. I would have you know the doctrines of grace and understand them—and be able to defend them with Scriptural arguments whenever they are assailed. Young people, I pray you, be willing to learn. Learn before you teach. Do not go blundering out to tell the tale of mercy before you have considered it and in some measure understood its grand points. God forbid that I should dampen your zeal, but I implore you to put a little knowledge with it, or else the best of causes will suffer at your hands. Become apt to teach by being first apt in learning. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior. Fill your basket with bread from His hands or you will never feed the multitude. I would have you well equipped for battle with the adversaries of the faith, orw1e3 at any rate, able to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

Do not even be satisfied with clear knowledge. Ask for living principles growing out of this knowledge. The religion of passion is flimsy. The religion of principle will endure wear and tear. Heat and excitement too often engender a mushroom life which dies as readily as it is produced. We want you to know the truth so as to feel its power till it dominates your

entire nature, sways the scepter of your soul, and becomes a resident monarch within you. Then will you be able to stand alone and you will not need a crowd about you, or a flaming orator to hold you in your place—you will know whom you have believed and be persuaded that He is able to keep that which you have committed to Him. Oh, if our young friends and old friends too, were well sown in this fashion, so that the truths they profess to believe had a living roothold in their souls by the Holy Spirit, what churches we should have and what little injury would the Pope and the infidel be able to do to us! A man may hold a religion—he may hold 50 religions and have a new one every week and be none the better—it is the religion which holds the man which will save him. Your Bibles printed on paper are a blessing, but to have the Scriptures written on the heart is far better. We need not so much the doctrine which has been driven into the brain by argument, but the truth worked into the soul by experience through the teaching of the blessed Spirit. Would to God that living principles were thus sown in all hearts.

The great point is that whatever is sown in us should be sown *in righteousness,* that is to say, that it is really sown and that honest seed is taken into our hearts. If you sow in error, however sincerely you sow, it will produce bad results upon your intellect. "Sow to yourselves in righteousness." Do not take handfuls of seed out of your grandfather's basket simply because *he* put it there—study to see whether it is God's seed. Do not snatch haphazard at what is in the creed, or the articles of your church—go to the winnowed corn of Scripture—sow that and that only. And though we, or an angel from heaven, should teach you anything contrary to the infallible word of God, refuse such seed a place in your hearts. Pray God to forgive the preacher his mistakes, but do not follow him. Pray to "sow to yourselves in righteousness." Receive the truth and only the truth and beseech the Lord to give you an honest grip of that truth—for there is such a thing as "holding the truth in unrighteousness." It is very easy to be untrue to the truth. Truth held by a bad man is as a jewel of gold in a swine's snout. The fair lily of truth should be held in a clean hand. Nor is this all. Let us ask the Lord to rid us of the mere pretense and mimicry of faith. Away forever with a sham faith. Never talk fictitious experience. Do not borrow bits from this man and bits from that and retail them as your own—this is unrighteous. Pretense in religion is a sort of blasphemy. May all our religion be such as will stand the test of the day of judgement. I charge you, make sure work in this matter. If, indeed, the Lord has plowed your heart, the field belongs to Him. Therefore obey His Word and remember how He forbids His people to sow with mingled seed. Let all that want what is sown in you to be true, honest, gracious, loving, Godlike and divine; so when the harvest comes you shall not lose what you have worked. God help you thus to sow.

The second inquiry is, *How shall we sow it*? The answer is, Sow in the Lord's appointed manner. The means of grace are ordained of God to help us in sowing, watering, weeding, and fostering the good seed.

Let us, in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, sow the heart first by diligently studying the Word of God. Every believer ought to be a student in Christ's college. We who preach the gospel are to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations. Now, a disciple is a learner. Are all the people who professed to have been converted during the late special services learners? I should like to know, for one, where they are. I have anxiously asked several of my brothers, the pastors of the neighboring churches, and they do not know. I should like to discover the churches which have received these new converts, for wherever I inquire, I hear of one or two, but scarcely any more—and up to this moment my earnest inquiries have brought me nothing but bitter disappointment. If these thousands were made disciples, how is it that they do not come under discipline? They professed to be converted, how is it that they have not united themselves with our churches? Do they need no instruction, or are none of us fit to edify them? Conversion should be the commencement of discipleship, but where are the disciples? Some months have now passed and with deepest sorrow I inquire with what churches are they associated. Where are they learning the way of God more perfectly? I should rejoice to know.

My young brethren, lately brought to Jesus, search the Scriptures through and through. Be not satisfied with simply knowing the way of salvation—ask to know all that God has revealed—for there is nothing unnecessary in the Bible. There is not a leaf that we could afford to tear out and throw into the fire and say, "It is a superfluity." It is all to be studied and we must give ourselves to the study of it by reading it, by hearing it, and by bowing ourselves to the influence of the Holy Spirit that He may lead us into all truth.

How shall we sow? Why, by an inward reception of the truth into the soul. I cannot tell you how the branch takes in the sap, but I know it does take it in. And you must receive God's truth into your hearts as living sap to your souls—it is the living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever. I want you not only to know the truth in theory, but to receive it in its inward power into your very souls as babes receive milk that you may feed thereon and grow. Only by such feeding can you come to the measure of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus.

You can, also, thus, "sow to yourselves in righteousness" by much prayer, much praise, and much of every form of communion with Jesus Christ. O brethren, if you are to do exploits, you must be strong, and you cannot be strong except in the Lord and in the power of His might. O brethren, if you are to be holy, you must commune with the Holy One and get a glow upon your countenance reflected from the face of your Lord. In His light only can you shine as lights in the world. To say you are converted is nothing. We desire your sanctification, your growing likeness to the Lord. I do not know whether I make my meaning fully apparent, but I mean this, that we must by all means that God has put into our power make our hearts to be a well-stored seed plot in which there shall grow for God all manner of precious fruits, which afterwards we shall reap and use to His glory. You are trying to sow others, some of

you, have you sown yourselves with that seed which yields seed to the sower and bread to the eater? Look to yourselves, for if you leave home culture unheeded you may have to complain with the spouse, "They made me a keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept." I am certain that if we want to spread religion we must begin by securing the improvement of those who are already Christians. Until the army of the Lord shall be stronger and every man shall have more of the force of divine life, we cannot expect to see the nations conquered by the church of God. Look well to this matter and see to it that you use the means of God's ordaining that by the power of the Spirit you may sow to yourselves.

Thirdly, *when shall we sow to ourselves*? What is the proper sowing time? I answer, especially at the time of conversion and immediately after your new birth. Very much depends upon the soil being well sown when it is newly plowed. Then the heart is tender. Then the soul is in the formative stage—like clay on the potter's wheel, or like wax that has just been melted—it is then ready to receive the right impression and form. When Paul was converted, he went into Arabia for a time and these months were, I have no doubt, the most profitable that Paul ever spent, for there he communed with God and his mind was impregnated with the truth. Perhaps he had never been so great an apostle during the rest of his life if it had not been for that little tarrying in Arabia. The disciples, after the resurrection of our Lord, were to *tarry* at Jerusalem till they were endowed with power from on high. O you Christian people, see to it that you give your first thoughts after your conversion to being edified and built up in your most holy faith. It will be the most practically useful endeavor to others in the long run if, like your Lord, you take time to do your Father's business in the quiet of Nazareth's contemplation than in bearing unripe fruit.

But, brethren, it is not immediately after conversion alone, I take it, that every Christian should sow unto himself in righteousness. We must be always sowing and if we do not, we shall not be always reaping. Ask the best instructed Christian and he will tell you that he knows more of his own folly than he ever did and is more willing to be a learner now than when he first entered into the school of Christ. Lord, teach us. Teach us every day. Even to grey hairs, still instruct us, that we may have the power to instruct others.

There should be a special sowing it seems to me, whenever we desire a special harvest. Notice our blessed Lord—whenever He was about to do some special action, such as sending out the 12, we always read that He retired to pray. Praying was His habit, but there were peculiar seasons when He had of it than usual—that more power might go out from Him. Whenever you are about to be, as you hope, a greater soul-winner, wait on the Lord more abundantly concerning it. If you are about to pass through an extreme trial and need great strength to yield a greater harvest of patience, have a greater sowing of grace by drawing nearer to God. Our grace should always be at the flood tide—but even then some flood tides are higher than others and we may pray the Lord to give us a

spring tide flood when extraordinary grace is required. Again I say, look well to yourselves, lest you lose that which you have worked. Seeing there remains a rest for the people of God, let none of us even seem to come short of it. With all your gettings, get understanding. With all your doings, see to it that your inner man is not neglected, that you walk before the Lord in secret and are not negligent in soul communion with Him. See that you walk circumspectly, that you grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We should be always sowing, for we have to be, in practical holiness, ever reaping.

In the next place, *why do so many omit to sow*? It may be, first, because they are lifted up with the notion that they do not require sowing. How idle is their conceit! Here is a piece of land that has just been enclosed from the devil's common, and it has for years produced only briars and thorns. It *needs* sowing. Is there good seed in it by nature hidden among the clods? Impossible! Do you believe that because it has been plowed it may now be left alone and a harvest will come spontaneously? You know better. The novice is not to be set up as a teacher—he should sit down as a scholar. He may tell what he knows—so far he has been sown and so far he may produce a harvest—but how can he tell what he does not know, and how shall he communicate to others what has never been communicated to himself? We do not pick up religious knowledge and maturity by instinct. We are bound to search out the meaning of the Word of God and yield ourselves to the illumination of the divine Spirit. We must prove our conversion to be true by being teachable as little children. We are not to rush naked to the fight, but to seek full equipment—and that we have not in ourselves—helmet and shield and sword are to be sought for in the armory of God.

Some do not like the sowing because it is very quiet work. A young man spends an hour searching into the truth for a certain doctrine. Well, that will never be put into the newspapers, or written in the reports of a society, and nobody will extol him for it—hence he is apt to despise such exercises. He goes hour after hour to the Lord Jesus and begs to be instructed in the deep things of God—nobody will sound a trumpet about that. No, nor do they sound trumpets when they sow fields—the shouting is left till they bring in the sheaves. But the sowing must be done though nobody shouts over it, and you must search the Word and get your souls well sown, none the less, but all the more, because it does not bring you applause.

Sometimes it is even suggested that to cultivate the heart by quiet study is a waste of time. The sower in sowing does not see any immediate results. Rather, as he scatters his handfuls, he perceives a waste in his basket and there is so much less corn in the granary. There are no results, except his weariness, as he toils over the furrows—yet he is a wise man. Yes, and you, dear friend, must not be snatching at results too soon. I am glad that you desire to win souls. May that passion be increased in you, but gladder still shall I be if you combine with that passion, the prudent thought that you must ask His blessed Spirit to make you a vessel fit to be used. If you have been trying to produce a harvest

for God without any preparatory sowing, you have only to take counsel of common sense and learn your error. You must be conscious that in some points you do not succeed. You are be staggered by infidel objections. You are often completely nonplussed when talking with inquirers because you do not know how to meet the questions put to you. Sometimes you blunder over a text and cannot make heads or tails of it. Well, come to school a little while before you go out as a teacher. Come and be plowed and sowed a little before thinking about the harvest home.

Sowing, besides, is often very sorrowful work. We read of some who sow in tears, but to learn costs humiliation, weariness, trouble, and crying, because of the task. I have cried my way into many a truth. I believe there is many a portion in God's Word whose meaning will never reach you except you will work your passage, as some poor men do when they want to go to America. You cannot open these sealed treasure houses without hard thought, long toil, much prayer, much conquering of prejudice, and yielding up of the soul to the Holy Spirit. This is a kind of labor which always pays well, and when it is over, your other work for God will be much lightened. After the sowing is over, the farmer rests and the seed springs up both by night and by day. He knows not how but by thorough seeding of the soul with the truth, studied and understood, there comes forth a future crop with wonderful ease and spontaneous growth. Lazy people generally take the most pains in the long run, but it is a saving of time and effort to store the mind and heart thoroughly at the very first. The shoeing of the horse and the buckling on of the harness with care will save time in the journey. Supplying a ship before it sails is a part of the means by which a safe and speedy voyage is procured. Your peace and strength in later years will amply repay you for care and effort now. Sow in the present that you may reap in the future.

Last of all, on this point, *why should we sow*? We should sow *unto ourselves* and cultivate our hearts very carefully because our lives must after all, as to their results, depend upon this sowing. If a man sows scantily—if he learns little, if he receives little of the Spirit of Christ into him—his life must be feeble and barren. How can there be a rich harvest from a scanty sowing? Little cast into the soil ends in little coming out of it. If a man sows in a patchy way, attending only to a few selected truths and graces, as some do, there will be a patchy character as the result. Some brethren have been thoroughly sown as to one furrow and there is a first-rate crop in that place. But then they neglect other portions—they do not strive before God to obtain all grace or to know all truth—and as a consequence their life is faulty in many points. Complete experience and watchfulness of every point are needful to the formation of a complete character. Beware of a half obedience in the heart, or a semi-illumination of the mind, for these will create an inconsistent character—a garden here and a desert there.

Be cautious also not to sow with mingled seed, for this was forbidden of old, and if you do it, there will be a bit of wheat in one place and a bit of tares in another—and you will be trying to serve God and mammon. Too many professors are as pleased with the tares as with the wheat.

They scarcely know one from the other. As the eastern plant called in our version, a tare, is very like the wheat, so there are counterfeits of the virtues and these deceive many. If we sow only with the good seed of the truth, we shall realize a holy, influential, acceptable character—but mingled seed will produce fickleness, inconsistency, poverty of character, and we shall bring no glory to the great Husbandman. I am certain I am right in enforcing this point upon all the children of God with great earnestness. Brethren, do you believe that people would be carried away with Ritualism, which has now grown to be undisguised Popery, had they been fully instructed in the doctrines of our Protestant faith? I do not believe it would have been possible. At the present moment the wolves leap into our churches and they find easy prey where the people are least instructed and established in the gospel. The people that know nothing for themselves, nothing by heart knowledge, are readily deceived. But where there is a clear understanding and a fervent love for the gospel, where there is a spiritual growth and an abundant communion with God arising out of inward vital principles, men are not carried away by every wind of doctrine. They are not deceived by the sleight of man and his cunning craftiness—they stand fast, rooted and grounded in Christ. In conclusion, this steadfastness is a part of the harvest of which I have now to speak.

II. WE MUST NOT NEGLECT THE HARVEST. If a man with constant watchfulness, holy fear, devout prayer, and simple faith in Jesus seeks to cultivate his own heart, he may expect fruit to come of it, both towards himself and his God. Towards himself one fruit will be stability, as I have already said. The man will be able to say, "O God, my heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise." He is not to be decoyed by the boasts of the finders of new truth, or by the contemptuous sneers of modern thinkers who deride the good old way, nor by those mighty discoverers who have found out that there is no truth at all. Experienced believers know and are persuaded and have firm moorings. Oh, be well sown, for then you will be stable and out of that stability will come solid comfort. Half the fears of Christian people rise like mists from the marshes of their ignorance. If we knew the promises better, knew the gospel better, knew God better, and knew Christ better, we should not have a tenth as many fears. Remember that as the soul is penetrated with the spirit of the gospel, it will be filled with peace and consolation—

"'Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live,
'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die."

Those sweet pleasures and solid comforts are the harvest which those reap who look well to the good sowing of their souls. Those whose hearts are sown by grace possess joys utterly unknown to other professors. What rapture and delight are frequently bestowed on those who have drawn near to God and had their souls full of Him! "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance." When others starve they shall feed, and when others

faint they shall renew their strength because their souls have learned to stay themselves on God alone.

One blessed fruit of this sowing is boldness in the Lord's service. The men that know their God shall be strong and do great exploits. He who fears God much, fears not men. He has been living near to God and cares no more for the opinions of men than for the howling of the wind over the moor. With this courage comes patience under suffering—the man who is full of grace is able to bear the Lord's will whatever it may be. This is a blessed fruit of the Spirit. You who think resignation a light thing may yet live to prize it. These are a few of the fruits which grow in a soul well-seeded by grace.

Now notice the text says that though we sow in righteousness we must reap *in mercy*. If any fruit, beloved, ever comes out of your earnest prayerfulness and watchfulness, it will be God's mercy that gives it to you, for do what you will, anything that is God-like and holy must be planted, nourished, and supported by divine power—and nothing short of it. If you have shown any holy courage or gracious patience, or sacred stability, or hallowed experience, or spiritual joy, or heavenly rapture, or true holiness, it is God's mercy that has enabled you to reap this precious fruit. God bids you sow—it is your duty to do so and to be jealous over your own spirit—but to reap to the glory of God is entirely the gift of His grace, from first to last, and we must cheerfully admit that it is so.

The text most pointedly bids us *reap*. "Reap in mercy." There is fruit upon you if you have sown aright in the power of the Spirit of God—therefore reap it. That is to say, when the season comes, be ready with the outward fruits of your inward grace. Let patience be ready in affliction and perseverance in the day of labor. As you bring forth these things, bless the Lord for them. Do not be exalted by them, for you are to reap in *mercy*—if you were to reap in any other way, you might be exalted—be humble, for it is God's mercy that gives you the graces which flourish in your soul. Take care to bless God for every good and perfect gift. And whatever comes out of your inner life, reap it so as to lay it out for the good of others in order that God may be glorified. If there is in you any zeal, courage, patience, and what not, as the result of the inner culture, then come forward and spend it for your Redeemer's praise. Remember you have nothing which you have not received—and having received it, you are bound in gratitude to expend it for Him who gave it to you.

But closing, let us see to it, I say, dear brethren and sisters, that all of us are keeping our hearts with all diligence before the Lord. It is the Spirit's work. We have admitted this, over and over again, but the Spirit of God awakens us to activity and does not lull us into a passive condition, for He would have us careful that these things be in us and abound that we are not barren nor unfruitful. He would have us see that we come not short in any good thing, but that we abound in all knowledge, all love, and all patience to His glory that thus our life may show that we have indeed come under the fostering husbandry of our Lord Jesus Christ. I would to God we were as a church lifted up to a higher platform alto-

gether, the whole of us, by one blessed lift from the divine Spirit. And then I would to God that out of us there might be chosen more ministers of Christ, mightier soul-winners, more missionaries among the heathen, and more of every order of soldiers for Christ. When our Master needs workmen, He does not take those who are sick. If you had to lay a railway you would not go to Brompton Hospital and pick out all the patients with consumption and give them a pickaxe or a spade to try and throw up embankments or dig cuttings. No, but you would select the strong men, the men of brawny arms, the men of muscle who know how to wield crowbar and spade. And so will God do in His church. We must be strong in grace, strong in secret, strong in private prayer, strong in fellowship with God, strong in vital principle within us, and after that the Lord will let us loose as a church upon His foes, like a tornado sweeping everything before us. We cannot bring out of ourselves what is not in us. We must go to God to be filled or we cannot run over. Lamps may shine, but they must be trimmed with oil, or else they will smell amiss and cease to shine—we must have food, or we cannot keep up our stamina—we must live upon Christ. We must be nurtured with His very heart's blood, or else the life in us will only be a life of pain and panting—not a life of triumph and of realization. See to this and may God bless you therein.

As for you who are not plowed, I beseech you, remember that you can bring forth no fruit to God. Be ashamed at your barrenness and cry mightily unto Him that He would deal graciously with you and bring you to Jesus. For now you are near unto cursing, and before long, unless divine grace prevents, your end will be to be burned. May God save you for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ephesians 4.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—719; 119 (VER. II), 4-6; 39.

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THE TURNING OF JOB'S CAPTIVITY
NO. 1262

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

"The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before."
Job 42:10.

SINCE God is immutable, He acts always upon the same principles and therefore His course of action in the olden times to a man of a certain sort will be a guide as to what others may expect who are of like character. God does not act by caprice, nor by fits and starts. He has His usual modes and ways. The psalmist David uses the expression, "Then will I teach transgressors *Your ways*," as if God had well-known ways, habits, and modes of action. And so He has, or He would not be the unchangeable Jehovah. In that song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, which is recorded in the 15th chapter of Revelation, we read, "Just and true are Your ways, You King of saints." The Lord has ways as high above our ways as the heavens are above the earth—and these are not fickle and arbitrary. These ways, although very different if we view them superficially, are really always the same when you view them with understanding. The ways of the Lord are right, though transgressors fall therein by not discerning them. But the righteous understand the ways of the Lord, for to them He makes them known and they perceive that grand general principles govern all the actions of God. If it were not so, the case of such a man as Job would be of no service to us. It could not be said that the things which happened before happened unto us for an example, because if God did not act on fixed principles, we could never tell how He would act in any fresh case—and that which happened to one man would be no rule whatever and no encouragement whatever to another. We are not all like Job, but we all have Job's God. Though we have neither risen to Job's wealth, nor will, probably, ever sink to Job's poverty, yet there is the same God above us if we are brought high and the same God with His everlasting arms beneath us if we are brought low. And what the Lord did for Job, He will do for us, not precisely in the same form, but in the same spirit and with same design. If, therefore, we are brought low tonight, let us be encouraged with the thought that God will turn our captivity around and let us entertain the hope that after the time of trial shall be over, we shall be richer, especially in spiritual things, than ever we were before. There will come a turning point to the growing heat of affliction and the fire shall cool. When the ebb has fallen to its lowest, the sea will return to its strength. When midwinter has come, spring will be near and when midnight has struck, then the dawning will not be far away. Perhaps, too, the signal of our happier

days shall be the very same as that of the patient patriarch and when we pray for our friends, blessings shall be poured into our own bosoms.

Our text has in it three points very clearly. First, *the Lord can soon turn His people's captivity*—"The Lord turned the captivity of Job." Second, *there is generally some point at which He does this*—in Job's case, He turned his captivity when he prayed for his friends. And, third, *believers shall never be losers by God*, for He gave Job twice as much as he had given him before.

I. First, then, THE LORD CAN SOON TURN HIS PEOPLE'S CAPTIVITY. That is a very remarkable expression—"captivity." It does not say, "God turned Job's poverty," though Job was reduced to the extremity of penury, having lost all his property. We do not read that the Lord turned his sickness, though he was covered with boils. It does not say that He turned away the sting of bereavement, reproach, and slander, although all those are included. But there is something more meant by the word *captivity*. A man may be very poor and yet not in captivity. His soul may sing among the angels when his body is on a dunghill and dogs are licking his sores. A man may be very sick and yet not be in captivity. He may be roaming the broad fields of covenant mercy, though he cannot rise from his bed. His soul may never enjoy greater liberty than when his body is scarcely able to turn from side to side. Captivity is bondage of mind—the iron entering into the soul. I suspect that Job, under the severe mental trial which attended his bodily pains, was, as to his spirit, like a man bound hand and foot and fettered—and then taken away from his native country—banished from the place which he loved, deprived of the associations which had cheered him, and confined in darkness. I mean that, together with the trouble and trial to which he was subjected, he had lost somewhat the presence of God. Much of his joy and comfort had departed. The peace of his mind had gone and the associations which he had formed with other believers were now broken. He was, in all these respects, like a lone captive. His three friends had condemned him as a hypocrite and would not have association with him except to censure him. And thus he felt like one who had been carried into a far country and banished both from God and man. He could only follow the occupation of a captive that is to be oppressed, to weep, to claim compassion, and to pour out a sorrowful complaint. He hung his harp on the willows and felt that he could not sing the Lord's song in a strange land. Poor Job! He is less to be pitied for his bereavements, poverty, and sickness than for his loss of that candle of the Lord which once shone about his head. That is the worst point of all when trouble penetrates to the heart. All the bullets in the battle, though they fly thick as hail, will not distress a soldier like one which finds lodging in his flesh. "To take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them," is a grand and manly thing. But when that sea of trouble fills the cabin of the heart, puts out the fires of inward energy, washes the judgement from the wheel, and renders the pumps of resolution useless, the man becomes very nearly a wreck. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" Touch a man in his bone and in his flesh, and yet he may exult—but touch him in his

mind—let the finger of God be laid upon his spirit—and then, indeed, he is in captivity. I think the term includes all the temporal distress into which Job came, but it chiefly denotes the bondage of spirit into which he was brought as the combined result of his troubles, his sickness, the taunts of his friends, and the withdrawal of the divine smile. My point is that God can deliver us out of that captivity—He can deliver us from both the spiritual and the temporal captivity and give us a joyful release.

The Lord can deliver us out of spiritual captivity and that very speedily. I may be addressing some tonight who feel everything except what they want to feel. They enjoy no sweetness in the means of grace and yet for all the world, they would not give them up. They used to at one time rejoice in the Lord. But now they cannot see His face and the utmost they can say is, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" It little matters that some live in perpetual joy—the triumphs of others cannot cheer a man who is himself defeated. It is idle to tell a distressed soul that it ought to rejoice as others do. What one ought to do and what one can do are sometimes very different, for how to perform that which we would, we find not. In vain do you pour your glad notes into a troubled ear. Singing songs to a sad heart is like pouring vinegar upon nitre—the elements are discordant and cause a painful effervescence. There are true children of God who walk in darkness and see no light. Yes, some who are the excellent of the earth, nevertheless, are compelled to cry aloud, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" Throughout all time some of these have been in the church and there always will be such, let our perfect brethren condemn them as they please. The Lord will always have His mourners. His church shall always have an afflicted and poor people in her midst. Let us all take warning, for we also may be tried and cast down before our day is over. It may be that the brightest eye among us may yet be dimmed and the boldest heart may yet be faint—and he that dwells nearest to his God at this moment may yet have to cry out in bitterness of soul, "O God, return unto me, and lift up the light of Your countenance upon me."

Therefore mark well this cheering truth—God can turn your captivity and turn it at once. Some of God's children seem to think that to recover their former joy has to take a long period of time. It is true, dear brother, that if you had to work your passage back to where you came from, it would be a weary voyage. There would have to be most earnest searching of heart and purging of spirit, struggling with inbred lusts and outward temptations, and all that, if joy were always the result of inward condition. There must be a great deal of scrubbing and cleansing and furbishing up of the house before you could invite your Lord to come, if He and you dwelt together on terms of law. But albeit that all this cleansing and purifying will have to be done, it will be done far better when you have a sense of His love than it ever can be if you do it in order to make yourself fit for it. Do you not remember when first you sought Him? You wanted Him to deal with you on the legal ground of making yourself better and you prepared the house for Him to come and dwell in it, but He would not come on such terms. He came to you just as you were—and when He

came, He Himself drove out the intruders which profaned the temple of your soul. And He dwelt with you in order to perfect the cleansing. Now He will vouchsafe to you the conscious enjoyment of His presence on the same terms as at first, that is, on terms of free and sovereign grace. Did you not, at that time, admit the Savior to your soul because you could not do without Him? Was not that the reason? Is it not a good reason for receiving Him again? Was there anything in you, when you received Him, which could commend you to Him? Say, were you not all over defilement and full of sin and misery? And yet you opened the door and said, "My Lord, come in, in Your free grace, come in, for I must have You or I perish." My dear friend, dare you invite Him now on any other terms? Having begun in the Spirit, would you be made perfect in the flesh? Having begun to live by grace, would you go on to live by works? When you were a stranger, did you trust in His love and now that you are His friend, will you appeal to the law? God forbid. Oh, brother, Jesus loves you still and in a moment He will restore you. Oh, sister, Jesus would gladly come back to your heart again and that in an instant. Have you never read that joyful exclamation of the spouse, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib"? Why can He not do the same with you now and quicken you, even in a moment? After all, you are not worse than you were when He first visited you—you are not in so sorry a plight, after all, as your first natural state—for then you were dead in trespasses and sins altogether. But He quickened you and now, though you say you feel dead, yet the very expression proves that there is some life lingering in you. Did I not hear you say—

"Return, O Sacred Dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest,
I hate the sins that made You mourn,
And drove You from my breast."

Why, friend, those sighs and groans are sweet to the Lord and they would not have been in you if He had not put them there. They are sure tokens that His grace has not been altogether taken from you. Do you not know, O child of God, that the grace of God is intended to meet all your sins after conversion as well as before conversion? Do you not know that the Lord loved you of old, despite your sins and He loves you still? Don't you understand that the ground of your salvation is not your standing, or your character, but the standing of Christ before God and the character and work of Christ in the presence of God? Believe firmly that He still loves you, for so, indeed, He does. Cast your eyes upon those dear wounds of His and read His love still written there. Oh, unbelieving Thomas, do not put your finger into your own wounds, for that will not help you. Place them in the wounds of Jesus. Come close to Him and you shall cry with ecstasy of spirit, "My Lord and my God." Well do I know what it is to feel this wondrous power of God to turn our captivity. When one is constantly engaged in ministry, it sometimes happens that the mind wanders, the spirit flags, and the energy is dampened. Yet all in a minute, the Lord can quicken us into vigorous activity. The heart catches fire and blazes gloriously when the Holy Spirit applies the fire. We have heard a hymn sung and we have said, "I cannot join in that as I could

wish," and yet all of a sudden, a mighty rushing wind has borne us away with the song right into heaven. The Lord does not take days, months, weeks, or even hours to do His work of revival in our souls. He made the world in six days, but He lit it up in an instant with one single word. He said, "Light be," and light was. And cannot He do the same for us and chase away our gloom before the clock ticks again? Do not despair, no, do not even doubt your God. He can turn your captivity as the streams in the south.

Beloved, *He can do the same as to our temporal captivity*. We do not often say much about temporals when we are preaching. I fear we do not say enough about them, for it is wonderful how the Old Testament is taken up with the narration of God's dealings with His people as to temporal things. Many people imagine that God has a great deal to do with their prayer closet, but nothing to do with their store-closet. It would be a dreadful thing for us if it were so. Indeed, my brethren, we ought to see as much the hand of our Lord on the table in the kitchen when it is loaded as we do at the communion table, for the same love that spreads the table when we commemorate our Savior's dying love spreads the table which enables us to maintain the bodily life without which we could not come to the other table at all. We must learn to see God in everything and praise Him for all that we have. Now, it may be I address some friend who has been a great sufferer through financial losses. Dear friend, the Lord can turn your captivity. When Job had lost everything, God readily gave it all back to him. "Yes," you say, "but that was a very remarkable case." I grant you that, but then we have to do with a remarkable God who still works wonders. If you consider the matter, you will see that it was quite as remarkable a thing that Job should lose all his property as it was that he should get it back again. If you had walked over Job's farm, at the first, and seen the camels and the cattle, if you had gone into his house and seen the furniture and the grandeur of his estate, if you had seen how those who passed him in the street bowed to him, for he was a highly respected man—and if you had gone to his children's houses and seen the comfort in which they lived, you would have said, "Why, this is one of the best-established men in all the land of Uz." There was scarcely a man of such substance to be found in that entire region. And if somebody had foretold that he would, in one day, lose all this property—all of it—and lose all his children, why you would have said, "Impossible! I have heard of great fortunes collapsing, but then they were built on speculations. They were only paper riches, made up of bills and the like. But in the case of this man, there are oxen, sheep, camels, and land—and these cannot melt into thin air. Job has a good substantial estate; I cannot believe that he will ever come to poverty." Why, when he went out into the gate where the magistrates sat to administer justice, they rose up and gave him the chief seat on the bench. He was a man whose flocks could not be counted, so great were his possessions—possessions of real property, not of merely nominal estate. And yet suddenly, marvelously, it all took to itself wings and disappeared. Surely, if God can scatter, He can gather. If God could scatter such an estate as

that, He could, with equal ease, bring it back again. But this is what we do not always see. We see the destructive power of God, but we are not very clear about the upbuilding power of God. Yet, my brethren, surely it is more consonant with the nature of God that He should give than take, and more like Him that He should caress than chastise. Does He not always say that judgement is His strange work? I feel persuaded that it was strange work with God to take away all Job's property from him and bring him into that deep distress. But when the Lord went about to enrich His servant Job again, He went about that work as we say, *con amore*—with heart and soul. He was doing, then, what He delights to do, for God's happiness is never more clearly seen than when He is distributing the liberality of His love. Why can you not look at your own circumstances in the same light? It is more likely that God will bless you and restore to you, than it is ever likely that He will chasten you and take away from you. He can restore all your wealth and even more.

This may seem to be a very trite observation, commonplace, and such as everybody knows, but beloved, the very things that everybody knows are those which we need to hear, if they are most suitable to our case. Those old things which we did not care about in our prosperity are most valued when we are cast down by the terrible blows of tribulation. Let me, then, repeat the truism, the Lord who takes away can as easily restore. "The Lord makes sore *and binds up*. He wounds *and His hands make whole*. He kills *and He makes alive*." Believe that He will put forth His right hand soon if the left has been long outstretched, and if you can believe it, it will not be long before you will be able to say He has regarded the low estate of His servant. He has lifted the poor from the dunghill and set him among princes, even the princes of His people, for the Lord puts down the mighty from their seat, but He exalts them that are of low degree. I leave you with this simple truth. The Lord can turn the captivity of His people. You may apply the truth to a thousand different things. You Sunday school teachers, if you have had a captivity in your class and no good has been done, God can change that. You ministers, if for a long time you have plowed and sowed in vain, the Lord can turn your captivity. You dear wives who have been praying for your husbands, you fathers who have been pleading for your children, and have seen no blessing, yet the Lord can turn your captivity in those respects. No captivity is so terrible but God can bring us back from it. No chain is so fastened but God can strike it off and no prison is so strong but God can break the bars and set His servants free.

II. I pass on to our second remark, which is this. THERE IS GENERALLY SOME POINT AT WHICH THE LORD INTERPOSES TO TURN THE CAPTIVITY OF HIS PEOPLE.

In Job's case, I have no doubt, the Lord turned his captivity, as far as the Lord was concerned, because *the grand experiment which had been tried on Job was now over*.

The suggestion of Satan was that Job was selfish in his piety—that he found honesty to be the best policy and therefore he was honest—that godliness was gain and therefore he was godly. "Have You not set a hedge

about him and all that he has?" said the old accuser of the brethren. The devil generally does one of two things. Sometimes he tells the righteous that there is no reward for their holiness and then they say, "Surely, I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocence." Or else he tells them that they only obey the Lord because they have a selfish eye to the reward. Now, it would be a calamity if the devil could charge the Lord with paying His servants badly. It would have been an ill thing if Satan had been able to say, "There is Job, a perfect and an upright man, but You have set no hedge about him. You have given him no reward whatever." That would have been an accusation against the goodness and justice of God. But, as the devil cannot say that, he takes the other course, and says—"You have set a hedge about him and all that he has; he serves You for gain and honor. He has a selfish motive in his integrity." By God's permission, the matter was tested. The devil had said, "Put forth, now, Your hand, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face." But Job did no such thing. In his extremity he said, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." God puts His servants sometimes into these experiments that He may test them—that Satan himself may know how true-hearted God's grace has made them and that the world may see how they can play the man. Good engineers, if they build a bridge, are glad to have a train of enormous weight go over it. You remember when the first Great Exhibition was built, they marched regiments of soldiers, with a steady tramp, over the girders that they might be quite sure that they would be strong enough to bear any crowd of men—for the regular tramp of well-disciplined soldiers is more trying to a building than anything else. So our wise and prudent Father sometimes marches the soldiers of trouble right over His people's supports to let all men see that the grace of God can sustain every possible pressure and load. I am sure that if any of you had invented some implement requiring strength you would be glad to have it tested—and the account of the successful trial published abroad. The gunsmith does not object to a charge being fired from the barrel at the proof house greater than any strain which it ought ordinarily to bear, for he knows that it will endure the proof. "Do your worst or do your best. It is a good instrument. Do what you like with it." So the maker of a genuine article is accustomed to speak—and the Lord seems to say the same concerning His people. "My work of grace in them is mighty and thorough. Test it Satan. Test it world. Test it by bereavements, losses, and reproaches—it will endure every ordeal." And when it is tested and bears it all, then the Lord turns the captivity of His people, for the experiment is complete.

Most probably there was, in Job's character, some fault from which his trial was meant to purge him. If he erred at all, probably it was in having a somewhat elevated idea of himself and a stern manner towards others. A little of the elder-brother spirit may, perhaps, have entered into him. A good deal that was sour came out of Job when his miserable comforters began to tease him—not a hundredth part as much as would come out of me, I guarantee you, or perhaps, out of you. But still, it would not have

come out if it had not been in him. It must have been in him or otherwise all the provocation in the world would not have brought it out—and the Lord intended, by his trials, to let Job have a view of himself from another standpoint—and discover imperfections in his character which he would never have seen if he had not been brought into a tried condition. When, through the light of trial and the yet greater light of God's glorious presence, Job saw himself unveiled, he abhorred himself in dust and ashes. Probably Job had not humbled himself of late, but he did it then. And now, if any sort of selfishness lurked in him, it was put away, for Job began to pray for his cruel friends. It would take a good deal of grace to bring some men to pray for such friends as they were. To pray for one's real friends, I hope, comes natural to us. But to pray for that Bildad and the other two, after the abominable things they had spoken and insinuated—well, it showed that there was a large amount of sweetness and light in Job's character—and abounding grace deep down in his soul or he would scarcely have interceded for such ungenerous stumpers upon a fallen friend. Now, behold, Job has discovered his fault and he has put it away. And the grand old man bows his knee to pray for men who called him a hypocrite—to pray for men who cut him to the very soul. He pleads with God that He would look in mercy upon men who had no mercy upon him, but had pitilessly heaped all kinds of epithets upon him, and stung him in his most tender places, just when they ought to have had pity upon him. His misery alone ought to have stopped their mouths, but it seems as if that misery egged them on to say the most cruel things that could possibly have been conceived—the more cruel because they were, all of them, so undeserved. But now Job prays for his friends. You see the trial had reached its point. It had evidently been blessed to Job and it had proved Satan to be a liar. And so now the fire of the trial goes out, and like precious metal, the patriarch comes forth from the furnace brighter than ever.

Beloved friends, the point at which God may turn your captivity may not be the same as that at which He turned Job's, for yours may be a different character. I will try and indicate, briefly, when I think God may turn your trial.

Sometimes He does so *when that trial has revealed to you your special sin*. You have been putting your finger upon many faults, but you have not yet touched the spot in which your greatest evil is concentrated. God will now help you to know yourself. When you are in the furnace, you will begin to search yourself and you will cry, "Show me why You contend with me." You will find out three or four things, perhaps, in which you are faulty, and you will commit yourself to the Lord and say, "Give me grace, good Lord, to put away these evil things." Yes, but you have not come to the point yet, and only a greater trial will guide you to it. The anger of the Lord smokes against your house, not for this or that, but for another evil and you have need to institute another search, for the images may be under the seat whereon a beloved Rachel sits. The evil in your soul may be just at the point where you think that you are best guarded against temptation. Search, therefore, and look, dear brother, dear sister,

for when the sin has been found out and the Achan has been stoned, then the valley of Achor shall be a door of hope and you shall go up to victory, the Lord going with you.

Perhaps, too, your turning point will be *when your spirit is broken*. We are, by nature, a good deal like horses that need breaking in, or to use a scriptural simile, we are as "bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke." Well, the horse has to go through certain processes in its management until, at last, it is declared to be "thoroughly broken in." And we need similar training. You and I are not yet quite broken in, I am afraid. We go very merrily along and yield to the rein in certain forms of service, but if we were called to other sorts of work, or made to suffer, we should need the kicking strap put on and require a sharper bit in our mouths. We should find that our spirit was not perfectly broken. It takes a long time of pain and sickness to bring some down to the dust of complete resignation to the divine will. There is a something, still, in which they stick out against God, and of many it is true, "Though you should crush a fool in mortar among wheat with your pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." We have been mixed in that mortar and with that pestle day after day and week after week, and yet we are still foolish. When our soul shall cheerfully say, "Not as I will, but as You will," then our captivity will be almost over. While we cry, "It must not be so, I will not have it so," and we struggle and rebel, we shall only have to feel that we are kicking against the pricks and wounding our foot every time we kick. But when we give up all that struggling and say, "Lord, I leave it entirely with You. Your will be done"—then will the trial cease, because there will be no necessity for it any longer. That is with some the culmination and turning point of trouble. Their Gethsemane ends when, like the Lord Jesus, they cry, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

Sometimes, again, trial may cease *when you have learned the lesson which it was intended to teach you, as to some point of gospel truth*. I think I have sometimes said that many truths of the gospel are like letters written with sympathetic ink. If you have ever had a letter written with that preparation, when you look at it, you cannot see anything whatever—it is quite illegible. The proper thing to do is to hold the writing up to a fire. As it warms at the fire, the writing becomes manifest and the letters are before you. Many of God's promises need to be held before the scorching fires of adversity and personal trouble—and then we read the precious secret of the Spirit's consolation. You cannot see the stars in the day time upon the surface of the earth. But if you go down into a well you can and when you go down a deep well of trouble it often happens that you see a beauty and luster in the promise which nobody else can see. And when the Lord has brought you into a certain position in which you can see the glory of His grace, as you could never have seen it anywhere else, then He will say, "It is enough. I have taught My child the lesson and I will let him go."

I think, too, it may be with some of us that *God gives us trouble until we obtain a sympathetic spirit*. I should not like to have lived 40 years in this world without ever having suffered sickness. "Oh," you say, "that

would have been very desirable." I grant you it appears so. When I met with a man that never had an ache or a pain or a day's sickness in his life, I used to envy him, but I do not now, because I feel very confident that he is a loser by his unvarying experience. How can a man sympathize with trouble that he never knew? How can he be tender in heart if he has never been touched with infirmity himself? If one is to be a comforter to others, he must know the sorrows and the sicknesses of others in his measure. It was essential to our Lord, and certainly, what was essential to Him is necessary to those who are to be shepherds of others, as He was. Now, it may be that by nature some of us are not very sympathetic. I do not think Job was—it is possible that though he was kind and generous to the poor, yet he was rather hard—but his troubles taught him sympathy. And, perhaps, the Lord may send you trouble till you become softer in heart so that afterwards you will be one who can speak a word in season to the weary. As you sit down by the bedside of the invalid, you will be able to say, "I know all the ins and outs of a sick man's feelings, for I have been sorely sick myself." When God has worked that in you, it may be He will turn your captivity.

In Job's case, the Lord turned his captivity *when he prayed for his friends*. Prayer for ourselves is blessed work, but for the child of God it is a higher exercise to become an intercessor and to pray for others. Prayer for ourselves, good as it is, has just a touch of selfishness about it. Prayer for others is delivered from that ingredient. Herein is love, the love which God the Holy Spirit delights to foster in the heart when a man's prayers go up for others. And what a Christ-like form of prayer it is when you are praying for those who have ill-treated you and despitefully used you. Then are you like your Master. Praying for yourselves, you are like those for whom Jesus died. But praying for your enemies, you are like the dying Jesus Himself. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," has more of heaven in it than the songs of seraphs. And your prayer, when offered for those who have treated you ill, is somewhat akin to the expiring prayer of your Lord. Job was permitted to take a noble revenge—I am sure the only one he desired—when he became the means of bringing them back to God. God would not hear them, He said, for they had spoken so wrongly of His servant Job. And now Job is set to be a mediator, or intercessor on their behalf. Thus was the contempt poured upon the patriarch turned into honor. If the Lord will only save the opposers' souls through your prayer, it will be a splendid way of returning bitter speeches. If many unkind insinuations have been thrown out and wicked words said, if you can pray for those who used such words and God hears you and brings them to Jesus, it will be such a triumph as an angel might envy. My brethren, never use any other weapon of retaliation than the weapon of love. Avenge not yourself in any way by uttering anything like a curse, or desiring any hurt or mischief to come to your bitterest foe. But inasmuch as he curses, overwhelm him with blessings. Heap the hot coals of your good wishes and earnest prayers upon his head and if the Lord uses you to bring him to a state of salvation, He shall be praised and you shall have happiness among the sons of men.

Perhaps some of you are in trouble now because you cannot be brought sincerely to pray for your enemies. It is a grievous fault when Christians harbor resentments. It is always a sad sign when a man confesses, "I could not heartily pray for So-and-so." I would not like to live an hour at enmity with any man living, be he who he may, nor should any Christian, I think. You should feel that however treacherous, dishonorable, unjust, and detestable the conduct of your enemy may have been to you, yet still it is forgiven, quite forgiven in your heart, and as far as possible forgotten, or wherein remembered, remembered with regret that it should have occurred, but with no resentment to the person who committed the wrong. When we get to that state, it is most probable that the Lord will smile upon us and turn our captivity.

III. The last word I have to say—the third word—is that BELIEVERS SHALL NOT BE LOSERS FOR THEIR GOD. God, in the experiment, took from Job all that he had. But at the end, He gave him back twice as much as he had—twice as many camels and oxen—and twice as many of everything, even of children. I heard a very sweet remark about the children the other day, for somebody said, "Yes, God did give him twice as many children, because his first family was still his. They were not lost but gone before." So the Lord would have His people count their children that are gone to heaven and reckon them as still belonging to the family, as the child did in Wordsworth's pretty poem, "Master, we are seven." And so Job could say of his sons and daughters, as well as of all the other items, that he had twice as many as before. True, the first family was all gone, but he had prayed for them in the days of their feasting. He had brought them together and offered sacrifices and so he had a good hope about them and he reckoned them as still his own. Tried brother, the Lord can restore to you double in temporal things if He pleases. If He takes away, He can as certainly give and that right early. He certainly can do this in spiritual things. And if He takes away temporals and gives spirituals, we are exceedingly great gainers. If a man should take away my silver and give me twice the weight in gold in return, should I not be thankful? And so, if the Lord takes away temporals and gives us spirituals, He thus gives us a hundred times more than He takes away.

Dear brethren, you shall never lose anything by what you suffer for God. If, for Christ's sake, you are persecuted, you shall receive in this life your reward. But if not, rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven. You shall not lose anything by God's afflicting you. You shall, for a time, be an apparent loser—but a real loser in the end you shall never be. When you get to heaven, you will see that you were a priceless gainer by all the losses you endured. Shall you lose anything by what you give to God? Never! Depend on it; He will be no man's debtor. There dwells not on earth or heaven any man who shall be a creditor to the Most High. The best investment a man makes is that which he gives to the Lord from a right motive. Nothing is lost which is offered to the cause of God. The breaking of the alabaster box of precious ointment was not a wasteful thing and he who would give to the Lord all that he had would have made a prudent use of his goods. "He that gives to the poor lends to the

Lord." And he that gives to the Lord's church and to the Lord Himself lays up his treasure in heaven where it shall be his forever.

Beloved, we serve a good Master and if He chooses to try us for a little while, we will bear our trial cheerfully, for God will turn our captivity before long.

In closing, I wish I could feel that this subject had something to do with you all, but it is not the case. Oh, no, there are some of you who have felt no captivity, but you have a dreadful captivity to come—and there is no hope of God's ever turning that captivity when once you get into it. Without God, without Christ, and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, you are in bondage until now and there will, before long, come upon you bondage that will never end. You cannot pray for your friends—you have never prayed for yourself. God would not hear you if you did pray for others, for first of all, you must be yourself reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. Oh, that you would mind these things and look to Jesus Christ alone for your salvation. If you do, He will accept you, for He has promised to cast out none who come to Him. And then look at this—after all is right between God and your soul, you need not fear what happens to you in the future, for come sickness or health, come poverty or wealth, all is right, all is safe, all is well. You have put yourself into the hands of God and wherever God may lift those hands, you are still within them and therefore you are always secure and always blessed. And if not always consciously happy, yet you have always the right to be so, seeing you are true to God and He delights in you. God bless you and give you all salvation, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 18.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—7, 48, 30.

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HOLD FAST YOUR SHIELD
NO. 1263

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

"Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which has great recompense of reward."
Hebrews 10:35.

THE early Christians had to suffer for their faith. They were exposed to great ridicule and enmity. They were, indeed, the byword, the laughingstock, and the derision of all mankind. There are still to be seen in Rome, in the praetorian guardroom, caricatures of Christians and of their Lord. I dare not mention what they are, but they are so insulting to everything which we hold dear that they remain as lasting evidence that Christians were counted as the offscouring of all things for the sake of Jesus, their crucified Savior. Nor did it end in ridicule. They were deprived of their goods. Ruinous fines were exacted from them. They were driven from city to city and not thought worthy to dwell among the sons of men. They were made a spectacle to all men, both in their lives and deaths. Very frequently they were not put to death as other condemned persons were, but their execution was attended with circumstances of cruelty and scorn which made it still harder to bear. They were daubed with pitch and set up in the gardens of Nero to be burned alive to light that tyrant's debaucheries, or taken to the amphitheater, there to fight with beasts and to be torn in pieces. Everything that could be invented that was at once degrading and cruel, their persecutors devised for them. Malice exhausted its ingenuity upon believers in Christ. Yet there was never a braver race of men. "Men," did I say? Why, the women were as brave as their brothers. The name of such women as Blandina will remain in everlasting recollection. Set in a hot iron chair, tormented with whips, or tossed upon the horns of bulls, such heroines showed no cowardice. The tenderness of their sex only increased the glory of the courage with which they adhered to their Master under unutterable torments. The despised sect wearied out a long succession of Roman emperors. Those despots passed edict upon edict, each one more ferocious than its predecessor, in order to exterminate the followers of the Nazarene. But the more they persecuted them, the more they multiplied. And instead of hiding themselves, they came boldly to the courts of the magistrates, confessing Christ and defying death.

Never was the victory of patience more complete than in the early church. The anvil broke the hammer by bearing all the blows that the hammer could place upon it. The patience of the saints was stronger than the cruelty of tyrants. Christ, then, the immortal Christ, was stronger than all the pangs of death and they triumphed though they

were slain. Truly did the apostle say, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." The secret reason for the triumph of Christians in those circumstances was *their confidence in Christ*. Brethren and sisters, we are not subjected to the same persecution and it will not do for us to wrap ourselves about with the garments of our ancestors and say that Christians are this and that, as though we were to be honored without enduring trial. Yet remember, there are still conflicts for you. If you are real Christians, you will have to endure the trial of cruel mockeries. In some cases, family ties are the source of far greater sorrow than comfort. Truly is it written, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." The coming of the gospel into a man's heart has often rendered him the object of hatred to those who loved him before. In his own house and in society abroad, the Christian working man has, at this day, to run the gauntlet much more severely than some suppose. And in almost every sphere of life, the genuine Christian meets with the "cold shoulder" and the sneer—and sometimes with cruel misrepresentation and slander, for until the hearts of men are changed, persecution in some form or other will continue. Those that are born after the flesh will always persecute those that are born after the Spirit.

For us, then, our only defense is holy confidence—the confidence which sustained the martyrs—and to us Paul speaks as well as unto them. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense of reward."

Let us notice, first, *the elements of this confidence* of which the apostle speaks. And then we shall speak upon *how it may be cast away*. God grant we may never attempt to do so. Thirdly, let us consider *why it should be held fast*—because it "has great recompense of reward."

I. First, then, WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF THIS CONFIDENCE of which the apostle speaks?

Those who are acquainted with the original will know that it is not very easy to explain this word in one English word. The nearest approach to it would be *boldness*—"Cast not away your boldness." It is frequently translated by that word. In Acts, where we read, "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John," it is the same word in the Greek as that which is here translated, "confidence." But it means something rather different from boldness, because we read of Christ, in the gospel by Mark, that He spoke *openly*—and there the word is precisely that which is here used and translated "confidence." And the apostle says, "We use great *plainness* of speech," and there the word is the same also. It means that freedom, that peace, that at-home-ness, which makes a man feel bold, free, confident. We come back to the word in the text—your confidence, your child-like plainness, freedom, quietude, peace of heart, rest, sense of security, and therefore courage. The apostle meant a great deal when he said, "Cast not away therefore your confidence."

And the elements of it seem to me to be these. First, c*onfidence in the principles which you have espoused*. Some persons appear to think that a state of doubt is the very best which we can possibly reach. They are very

wise and highly cultured individuals and they imagine that by their advanced judgments nothing in the world can be regarded as assuredly true. Some of the broad church school would seem to believe that no doctrine in the Bible is worth dying for, or worth anybody's losing over and above a halfpenny for. They do not feel sure of any doctrine—it may be true and there is a good deal to be said for it, but then, a good deal may be said on the other side—and you must hold your mind, "receptive," and be ready to accept "new truth." Some Robinson or other said something about new truth, as if there ever could be such a thing, and under cover of his probably misinterpreted speech, like chameleons, they are always taking their hue from the particular light that falls upon them. They have no light in themselves and no truth which they hold to be vital. Such people cannot understand this confidence, but the smallest babes in the family of faith know what it means. Here are certain things which God has taught me. I believe them and am sure about them. "Dogmatical," one says. Exactly so, call it what you like, but we are bold to confess that there remains no doubt to us after God has spoken. The question is solved by God's Word. The doubt is laid to sleep forever by the witness of the Holy Spirit. Oh, to know the grand truths of the gospel and to know them infallibly. For instance, the grand doctrine of the substitutionary sacrifice of the Son of God—to know it and hold it and be able to say, "Let others question and quibble, but I believe it. It is my only hope, it is all my salvation. I stake my soul upon it. If that is not true, then am I lost." And so with regard to all the other grand truths of revelation, the thing is to know them and grasp them firmly. There must be leverage if we would move men and to have a leverage you must have a fixed point. There must be certain undoubted truths about which you can sing, "O God, my heart is fixed. My heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise"—things which you perceive to be plainly taught in the Scriptures—things brought home by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is the groundwork of true confidence. But to make it complete there must be *an open acknowledgement of our belief in our Lord Jesus*. The apostle has said, "Hold fast the profession of your faith," not merely your faith, but the profession of it. To hold a truth which I am ashamed to utter is to be false both to God and man. To have convictions which I stifle and principles which I dare not profess is to be unworthy of the Lord that bought me and unworthy of the Spirit who has instructed me. God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and God forbid that we should refuse to glory in that. Let us never cloak our faith in Jesus, whatever the company, and though we are not to cast pearls before swine, yet if a time comes to exhibit pearls, let us not conceal them, even though swine should gaze upon them. We are not sent into the world to comfortably sneak through it into heaven, but we are sent, like a troop of soldiers, to fight our way and to win a victory all along from the beginning of our pilgrimage even to the close of it. The colors are not to be covered up and kept by the color-sergeant in a tent somewhere in the rear. They are to be unfurled to the breeze and borne

in the front and every believing soldier is to labor earnestly to bear them farther forward and to smite the foe that dares to insult the standard of the Lord. "Cast not away your confidence;" that is, hold confidently the truths which God has taught you and never blush or stammer, or show the slightest sign of hesitancy in avowing them.

To do all this you must *know your own interest in those* truths. A man will readily let go a truth which may condemn him. Who will die for a truth in which he has no share? The man who can live and die for Christ is the man who believes that Christ has lived and died for him. A doctrine—what is that? A mere statement written in a book. It stirs no man's heart and awakens no one's enthusiasm. But a blessed truth which has been verified in one's own experience, in which one feels that he has a share, no, which is all his own—this is a thing for which a man may well be willing to be counted the offscouring of all things. Beloved Christian friends, do you know that you have passed from death unto life? If so, you do not doubt the doctrine of conversion. Do you know that you have been washed in the blood of Jesus? If so, you do not doubt the doctrine of atonement. Do you know that Christ has saved you, and that you are one with Him? Then you do not doubt the doctrine of union to Christ. Do you know that He has preserved you to this day? Then you do not doubt His faithfulness—you have proof of it before your eyes. We must "eat this roll," as Ezekiel did, before we can bear testimony to it. The truths must be the food of our spirits, the sustenance of our inward life, before we can have that confidence in it which the apostle bids us never to cast away.

These are the first points of confidence—a full conviction of the truth of the gospel, willingness to confess it, and a full assurance of our own interest in it. But the word, as I have said, cannot have all its meaning brought out by this word boldness. It means beside, *a full and firm reliance upon the faithfulness of God*, so that we are free from all mistrusts, fears, and simply rest in God. It is a very sweet thing to admit that God is true and to sing with the psalmist of old, "His mercy endures forever." "Why," says one, "that is a very simple fact and I never doubted it." Dear brethren, when the Holy Spirit taught the psalmist to make that psalm whose many verses conclude with, "His mercy endures forever," He knew very well that we do not so easily believe in the Lord's enduring mercy as we think we do. And therefore He has given us line upon line and precept upon precept. Do you not feel that you have a very great deal of faith in God when you have no afflictions? Do you not feel sure about your daily bread when you have a good job, or have an excellent pension, or a good sum of money in the bank? Such faith is very easy and very unreal—the publicans and sinners have that faith. But to trust in God when you see nothing but starvation before you, to believe when you cannot see, ah, this is another kind of faith, and *the* faith and the only faith that is of the operation of the Spirit of God. I wonder whether you could have believed in Jesus if, for having been here last night, you had been arrested at the foot of the steps of the Tabernacle and taken off to Horsemonger Lane

jail, and kept there in prison in the dark, with only bread and water for several months. Suppose you were occasionally stretched upon the rack, or beaten with rods? Would you feel, in the loneliness of the prison, smarting under the wounds you endured, quite sure that all things worked together for good—quite certain of that promise, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you"? If it were intimated to you that tomorrow morning you must go out to be burned to death in the great square of the city, or to be torn to pieces in the amphitheatre by wild beasts, would you be quite sure that the promises of God were faithful and true? Yet, beloved, that is the kind of faith we must have, for God deserves it. He cannot lie. He has promised that those who trust in Him shall never be forsaken or confounded world without end. Now, to have the confidence of the text, we must subscribe in heart to a full surrender—"Whatever happens, I believe in God. Come what may, I rest in His promises and I leave my matters entirely in His hands, resting them with Him as with a faithful Creator." Happy is the man who has this confidence. Let him take care that he never casts it away.

Where that confidence really reigns in the soul, it takes the form of a sense of *full acceptance before God*. Let me illustrate that by the condition of a child. A child that lives in full confidence with its father is quite sure of its father's love. It is also sure about its father's wisdom and consequently, quite content with all its father's dealings. This is confidence and the sort of confidence which is meant in the text. That, at least, is part of what is meant—confidence towards God—confidence that all is well between my soul and God. Confidence that I can walk with Him in the light as He is in the light—that the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses from all sin and therefore I have fellowship with Him as a man has fellowship with his friend. We must have confidence so as to avail ourselves of perpetual access to God, so as to be able to speak with Him at all times, not merely in the closet where we are accustomed to pray, but everywhere. True confidence makes the believer feel, "I am God's child. I can speak with my Lord whenever I will and I can hear His voice everywhere—hear it in nature as well as in the Bible. I dwell always in my Father's own house at home and I know that 'goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.'" Oh, what a sweet feeling that is, to know that you are always near to God, that He is always with you and consequently, you are always at home and your Father is always accessible.

Upon this there follows that further confidence, of which John says, "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us"—confidence that *when we pray we shall be heard*. Now, all Christians accept this as a matter of doctrine, but very few Christians really believe it. When you talk to them about God's hearing prayer, they open their eyes at you. You tell them some cases in which He has answered you, and they look upon you as a wonder. Dear Mr. Muller's orphanage at Bristol is thought to be a sort of miracle and we ourselves, in that and other cases, are conscious of a feeling of aston-

ishment when we hear of God's answering prayer. It should not be so. If we have the confidence we ought to have in our heavenly Father, we shall be astonished at His goodness, but we shall not be astonished at the fact that He keeps His promises and answers His children's prayers. I sometimes felt, when I was a child, astonished at my father's goodness in giving me what I asked for. But not when he had previously promised it to me. A loving child asks with expectation. Probably if he had not the expectation he would scarcely ask, but he asks because he expects to receive. And oh, what a sweet confidence that is—to know that God is your Father, that you are on happy terms with Him through Jesus Christ, and that you may speak to Him and whatever you desire you may ask of Him, pleading that promise—"Delight yourself also in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart." Oh, blessed, blessed confidence! May we always enjoy it!

Over and above that, how delightful to feel that *even what we do not pray for, by reason of ignorance or forgetfulness, our gracious God will bestow*. "Your heavenly Father knows what you have need of before you ask Him." I would pray as if I had to remind the Lord of everything, and yet feel when I have done that, He has never forgotten, nor could He fail to give anything that was good for me, for did He not say, "No good thing will I withhold from then that walk uprightly"? Beloved, this is the confidence that we have towards God that He will bestow upon us all things necessary for this life and godliness. That He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able and that when He sends a trial, He will also make a way of escape. "Ah," says one, "that is a happy way of living if we could only attain to it." That is how you ought to live, dear brethren, and if you ever do so live, then remember the text, "Cast not away therefore your confidence." If you get it, hold it. If you have a childlike simplicity of confidence in God, reckon it to be a priceless jewel and watch it night and day. Let no one rob you of it, but labor with might and main, by His blessed Spirit, to abide in this confidence as long as you live.

You may add to all this the confidence that *He is able to keep that which you have committed to Him*, for we have this confidence—that whether we sleep or wake we shall be together with Him. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord," for we are confident that though we shall drop this tabernacle, "We have a temple of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." With confidence we are looking forward to resurrection after death. We are looking forward to a grand reunion with the beloved ones that have gone before. We are looking forward to being satisfied when we awake in His likeness. We are looking forward to seeing the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off. We are looking forward to sitting upon Christ's throne, even as He overcame and has sat down with His Father upon His throne. We comfort one another with these words. Yes, we joy and rejoice and we reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall revealed in us. Oh, blessed confidence, the confidence that He will keep us

while we are here and will glorify us hereafter. As sure as Christ is glorified so must His people be. "If we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him." This is the confidence we have in Him. Cast not away your confidence.

II. Having thus labored as best I could to show the confidence, let us now spend a few moments in considering how WE MAY CAST IT AWAY.

It strikes one, at once, on reading the passage—and the best expositors think so too—that there is here an allusion to the Greek soldier with his shield on his arm. When he went out to battle wearing his shield, which covered him from head to foot, the rule was that he must either come back with his shield or be brought back upon it—but he must never cast it away. Among the Spartans, there was a law that any soldier who cast away his shield must die—he was not fit to be a soldier. You remember how one of the old Scriptural songs speaks of the shield of the mighty which was vilely cast away? This showed that in the old war times, the casting away of your shield was a disgrace. It was showing the white feather. It was giving up the conflict and ceasing to hope for safety, much less victory. Our confidence is our shield and we are not to cast it away, or suffer any to tear it from us, but hold it fast until the battle is fought and the victory is won forever.

How can you cast your confidence away? You can cast it away by *exchanging it for self-confidence*. You can get off from the platform on which you now stand, which is that of simple confidence in your Savior, and you can very readily grow confident in yourselves. All along the road to heaven there are many junctions and at every one of these, the devil cries out, "Change here for self-righteousness!" The high level railway of the perfect brethren has been much infested of late by devils which cry, "Change here for self-confidence!" When I hear how good they are and how they have conquered their tempers, I am delighted to hear that they are on such good terms with themselves. But at the same time I remember the proverb, "Let another praise you and not your own lips," and I conclude that if they had been quite as good as they say they are, they would have held their tongues about it. My dear brethren, you who have begun in the Spirit, do you hope to be perfected by the flesh? Hang on to Christ as a sinner's Savior till you die. If it has been Christ up till now, do not put, "Christ and Co." for that firm will fail inasmuch as one of the partners is already a bankrupt. Christ alone will stand and stand forever. Whatever run there may be upon that bank, it will pay out gold coin without end. When *you* come in, it is a *self-reliance* altogether. Better to yoke a cherub with an ant than to think of yoking yourself with Christ. You have cast away your confidence if in any measure or degree you confide in self. God keep us from that and hold us fast to the platform of simple reliance on Christ. I remember telling you years ago a story you have often met with since, of poor Jack the huckster who heard a little ditty sung—

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

That exactly suited Jack because he had nothing of his own and so he took Christ and trusted Him. He wanted to join the church and they asked what was his experience, and he said he did not think he had any, only he was a poor sinner and nothing at all and Jesus Christ was his all in all. "But," they said, "don't you have doubts?" And he said, "Well, what is there to doubt? I know that I am a poor sinner and nothing at all, I cannot doubt that. And Jesus Christ is my all in all, for the Bible says so, and why should I doubt it?" They could never get him away from that standpoint—

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

Ah, brethren, if you get an inch above that platform, you will have to come down again. Be empty and Christ will be your fullness. But if you become full in yourself you have done with Christ. Cast not away your confidence by leaving your simple reliance upon Jesus Christ.

Some, however, cast away their confidence by *giving way to sin*. Look at the child I spoke of just now who has such confidence in his father. He goes in and out the house and asks for what he wants and expects to receive it because he knows his father loves him. But see, he has done what his father told him not to do! Do you not see that his confidence is gone? At night he slinks away to bed. In the morning at breakfast he does not eat much, for his father is grieved. That child does not think that he has ceased to be his father's child, but he knows that his father is grieved with him and he cannot act with freedom and confidence. If his brothers were to say, "John, ask father for such-and-such," he would say, "No, you had better; I am out of favor with him." Perhaps the father has not said a word, yet, but the boy is conscious of having done wrong and is ill at ease. If he is a wise child he will go at once, and say, "Father, I have done wrong. Forgive me." And after his father has said, "Yes, dear child, I forgive you," his confidence will return. But by doing wrong, he has cast away his confidence. He has faith in his father that he will provide him with food and raiment and all things necessary—he never loses that faith—but when he disobeys, he has not that confidence towards his father which enables him to act as a loving, favored child should do. My brothers and sisters, we cannot enjoy confidence towards God if we live in disobedience. Old Master Brooks says, "Assurance will make us leave off sinning, or sinning will make us leave off assurance." And depend upon it, it will. He who lives in the light of God's countenance must mind what he is doing. Kings' favorites live under a jealous eye. More is expected from those who lean their heads upon Christ's bosom than from any other of the disciples. You cannot grieve your heavenly Father and yet feel the same confidence towards Him.

Perhaps some of you know that you have not this confidence. Remember that the Lord is ready to forgive you. He is waiting for you to come and say, "Father, I have sinned." Never let sin rankle in your conscience. It is well every night to clear all out by confession. Dear Mr. Muller said from this pulpit, "Do not begin the day unless you feel happy in the Lord." The advice is good. See that you walk in obedience with great

watchfulness, so shall you have the freedom of children towards God. "Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God."

There is another way of losing our confidence, and that is *by getting into worldly company* and mixing up with the gay and frivolous. A child would soon lose his loving, confident feeling towards his father if his father had an enemy and he constantly went into that enemy's house and heard all the language that was used there. Why, he would gradually harbor hard and wrong thoughts about his father—and if his father knew that he had been associating with his enemies, the child could not feel towards his father as before. Have you been cast into company some evening where the conversation was not at all to edification, but light and frivolous and perhaps worse? If you are a child of God, have you not felt unfit for devotion when you reached home? You wanted to pray, but you could not.

A deadening influence will come over your intimate communion with God if you are on close terms with unbelievers. You cannot walk with God and His enemies. You cannot be in league with Christ and Belial at the same time, or sit at your Master's table and expect Him to smile upon you after you have partaken of the cup of devils. Do not lose your sweet confidence and holy boldness in God's presence by associating with the world, but come out from among them and be you separate.

You can very easily lose your confidence *by changing your aim in life*. The Christian's aim in life is to live for God's glory. If he does so, no persecution can ever shake him. If his goods are spoiled, he says, "If it glorifies God for me to lose my property, I am no loser. I gave my goods to God years ago." If he is put in prison, he says, "I have lost my liberty, but I am no loser. I gave up my liberty to God long ago." If they tell him that he will die, he says, "Well, I am no loser, for I gave Him my life long ago. I am altogether Christ's." While your objective is God, you will be bold as a lion. But a sordid motive is the mother of cowardice. Suppose a minister preaches so that he may receive honor from men? How anxious he will be to please his hearers—and he will cut and trim to do so. But if his sole objective is the glory of God, he will not smooth his speech or withhold rebukes because of man's anger. He will care no more for human criticism than for the sighing of the rushes by the river. If we once shift our motive, if we seek after honor from men, or for money, or anything of self, we have cast away our confidence. You can be perfectly confident when you feel, "What I have done I did for God's glory. I have a clear conscience about it." But your confidence is gone if your motive is selfish. Why, you can look 7,000 devils in the face and not care for one of them when your conscience will bear the piercing eyes of God. But if you must confess to sordid motives, you fall from your excellence and stand in doubt of your own honesty. Cast not away your confidence, then, by shifting your aim.

Alas, dear friends, some unhappy professors have apparently cast away their confidence *in utter unbelief*. They set out with a great confidence of a certain sort. Like Pliable, from the City of Destruction, they

were going to have the Celestial City and enjoy it forever. But they fell into the Slough of Despond and they felt that their confidence could not be kept up—and so they got out of the slough on the side that was nearest their own house—and went back through sheer despair of better things. May God keep you from this! Remember, if you really are Christians, there is nothing for you but to fight it through. This is what Bunyan impresses upon us in his portrait of the Pilgrim, who, when he saw Apollyon standing across the way and heard him swear that he would spill his soul, would have turned back, but he reflected that he had no armor for his back, so that to retreat would be certain destruction. For you there is nothing but to cut a lane right through your enemies till you come up to the throne of God. To turn back means sure damnation. God's vengeance rests upon the deserter and the apostate. Oh then, brethren, we must go forward. And may God the Holy Spirit help us to do so. If we think of turning aside, we are casting away our confidence and renouncing its reward.

III. I will close by noticing THE REASONS GIVEN IN THE TEXT FOR HOLDING FAST OUR CONFIDENCE.

The first argument in the text is "therefore." "Cast not away *therefore* your confidence." What does this "therefore" mean? Why, it means this—*because you have already endured so much*. You were made a laughingstock and you suffered the loss of your goods, therefore, cast not away your confidence, for if you do, you will have suffered for nothing. I have known a man begin to build his house and he has spent a great deal of money upon it. But, at length, he has thought, "I do not quite like the situation. Shall I finish the building?" One strong argument for going on has been this, "I have spent so much money on it; I must go through with it." Now, some of you have spent much upon your faith. By God's grace you have been, for years, following on to know the Lord. You bore the troubles of your early youth when perhaps father and mother were against you and you were bold then for Christ. Some of you have been known as Christian working men for years and you have encountered the chaff of the workshop for many a month and yet you have not gone back. Well, you have spent a good deal upon your faith—never give it up, my brother—never give it up. If, for your Lord's sake, you have had the honor to be abused and scandalized, do not turn your back, now. What? Have you half routed the enemy and will you now flee? Believe me, the rest of them will be routed, too. Yon cowards have fled before you already, fight on till the rest are vanquished. "But," you say, "They come up thick and fast." So much the better, for so much the grander the victory in the end; you can overcome them—by God's grace you can. Do not lose the victories which you have already gained. If it was wise to go so far, it will be wise to go on to the end. Cry for grace to persevere, for he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved, and only he. Having gone so far, it will be disgraceful to turn back now. Do not even think of it. I remember going over the Col D'Obbia on the Alps and when I got a little way down I found myself on a steep mountain side upon a mass of

loose earth and slate. There seemed to me to be some miles of almost perpendicular descent and no road. My head began to swim. I set my feet fast down in the loose soil, turned my back to the scene below me, my face to the hillside, and stuck my hands into the earth to hold as best I could. I cried to my friend, "I shall never go down there. I will go back." He coolly replied, "Just look where you have come from." When I looked up it appeared to be much worse to try and clamber up than it could possibly be to go down and so he remarked, "I think you had better go on, for it is worse going back." So, brethren, we must go on, for it will be worse going back. Let us never think of retreating, but gird up the loins of our mind and push onward with firm resolution, by the help of the Spirit of God.

Here is the other argument—Do not cast away your confidence, for *it has great recompense of reward*. There is a reward in it *now,* for it makes us *happy*. When we are sweetly confident in God and do not molest ourselves with doubts and fears, how happy we are. Who has not read Cowper's beautiful description of the cottager with her pillow lace and bobbins, who knew no more than, "her Bible true, a truth the learned Frenchman never knew"—who was just as happy as the days were long? We are never so happy as when, in childlike simplicity, we trust our God without a doubt. Do not cast away your confidence, since it yields you such pure delight.

But it makes you so *strong*, too—strong both to bear and labor. When you are like a child in confidence before God, you can endure pain and reproach right bravely—

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

You can bear, like Atlas, a world upon your shoulders when you have God within you. If He is near, you laugh at difficulties. And as for impossibilities, there are no such things. Brethren, hold fast your confidence, because it ministers to your strength.

And moreover, it makes you *victorious*. Many a man has been won to Christ by the confidence of simple Christians. Our doubts and fears are mischievous. They are thistle seed. They sow unbelief in others, but our childlike reliance upon God, our humble joy in our dear Father's care and our unmoved resolution through thick and thin to stick to our Master is likely to convert others, by God's good Spirit, to the right way. Therefore, cast not away your confidence.

And best of all, there is a *recompense of reward to come*. The day will come when the King will review His troops as the squadrons come back from the battle. The day will come when He shall come down our ranks and look at every one of us, and if we have been faithful in this evil day, O brethren, it will repay us for anything we suffered if He shall say to us, "Well done!" Oh, those two words! These were enough to make us eternally happy. But hear the rest—"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter you into the joy of your Lord." Believe me, believe me, my hearers,

kings and mighty men, who have rolled in riches and yet were enemies to Christ, when they hear Christ say, "Well done!" to His poor people, will think themselves accursed that they were not martyrs and that they did not lie in prison, or at least suffer reproach for Christ. The enemies of Christ laugh today, but they will laugh on the other side of their faces before long. Let them laugh, for *we* shall win. The day shall come when shame shall be the promotion of fools, but the royal robe shall be put upon each man's back who dared to be a fool for Christ. The scars of suffering saints shall shine like diamonds and they that were most abused shall be the brightest of the shining ones. Most glad of all will they be who have the ruby crown of martyrdom to cast at the Savior's feet—but each one of you who have boldly held on to Christ, though despised and rejected—and dared to suffer slander for His dear name's sake—you shall be among the first and brightest who wear the white robe and share their Master's victory. By the palm and by the white robe, by the unfading crown, by the halos of angels, and the streets of gold, cast not away your confidence, for it has great recompense of reward.

Oh, you that know not Christ and have no confidence in Him, beware! He is coming—coming to call you to judgement. Beware, for in the day of His appearing He will look upon you and He will know that you never trusted Him and never suffered for Him, but chose the broad road that leads to destruction. Oh, how you will tremble, then, and with what agony will you cry to the mountains, "Hide us from the face. Hide us from the face of Him that sits upon the throne."

God grant that you may not thus be carried away with terror, but may you believe your Lord and then have a full confidence in Him—a confidence which you will never cast away, "for it has great recompense of reward."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Hebrews 10:19-39.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—675, 632.

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THE MAN OF ONE SUBJECT
NO. 1264

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 31, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."
1 Corinthians 2:2.

PAUL was a very determined man and whatever he undertook he carried out with all his heart. Once let him say, "I determined," and you might be sure of a vigorous course of action. "This one thing I do" was always his motto. The unity of his soul and its mighty resoluteness were the main features of his character. He had once been a great opposer of Christ and His cross and had shown his opposition by furious persecutions. It was not so very much to be wondered at that when he became a disciple of this same Jesus, whom he had persecuted, he should become a very ardent one and bring all his faculties to bear upon the preaching of Christ crucified. His conversion was so marked, so complete, so thorough, that you expect to see him as energetic for the truth as once he had been violent against it.

A man so whole-hearted as Paul, so thoroughly capable of concentrating all his forces as the apostle was—and so entirely won over to the faith of Jesus—was likely to enter into his cause with all his heart and soul. And thus he was determined to know nothing else but his crucified Lord. Yet do not think that the apostle was a man easily absorbed in one thought. He was, above the most of men, a reasoner, calm, judicious, candid, and prudent. He looked at things in their bearings and relations and was not a stickler for minor matters. Perhaps even more than might perfectly be justified, he made himself all things to all men that he might by all means win some, and therefore any determination which he came to was only arrived at after taking counsel with wisdom. He was not a zealot of that class which may be likened to a bull which shuts its eyes and runs straight forward, seeing nothing which may lie to the right or to the left—he looked all round him, calmly, quietly, and though he did, in the end, push forward in a direct line at his one objective, yet it was with his eyes wide open, knowing perfectly what he was doing and believing that he was doing the best and wisest thing for the cause which he desired to promote. If, for instance, to have opened his ministry at Corinth by proclaiming the unity of the Godhead, or by philosophically working out the possibilities of God's becoming incarnate—if these had been the wisest plans for spreading the Redeemer's kingdom—Paul would have adopted them. But he looked at them all and having examined them with all care, he could not see that anything was to be gained by indirect preaching, or by keeping back a part of the truth. Therefore he deter-

mined to go straight forward and promote the gospel by proclaiming the gospel. Whether men would hear or whether they would forbear, he resolved to come to the point at once and preach the cross in its naked simplicity. Instead of knowing a great many things which might have led up to the main subject, he would not know anything in Corinth save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Paul might have said, "I had better beat about the bush and educate the people up to a certain point before I come to my main point. To lay bare my ultimate intent at the first might be to spread the net in the sight of the birds and frighten them away. I will be cautious and reticent and will take them with guile, enticing them on in pursuit of truth." But not so—looking at the matter all round as a prudent man should, he comes to this resolve, that he will know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I would to God that the "culture" we hear of in these days, and all this boasted "modern thought," would come to the same conclusion. This most renowned and scholarly divine, after reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting everything as few men could do, yet came to this as to the issue of it all—"I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." May God grant that the critical skill of our contemporaries and their laborious consideration may land them on the same shore by the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

I. Our first consideration, this morning, will be, WHAT WAS THIS SUBJECT TO WHICH PAUL DETERMINED TO SHUT HIMSELF UP WHILE PREACHING TO THE CHURCH AT CORINTH? That subject was one, though it may also be divided into two—it was *the person and the work* of our Lord Jesus Christ—laying special stress upon that part of His work which is always the most objected to, namely, His substitutionary sacrifice, His redeeming death. Paul preached Christ in all His positions, but he especially dwelt upon Him as the crucified one.

The apostle first preached his great Master's *person*—Jesus Christ. There was no equivocation about Paul when he spoke of Jesus of Nazareth. He held Him up as a real Man, no phantom, but one who was crucified, dead, and buried—and rose again from the dead in actual bodily existence. There was no hesitation about His Godhead either. Paul preached Jesus as the Son of the Highest, as the wisdom and the power of God, as one "in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." You never doubted when you heard Paul, but that he believed in the divinity and the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ—and worshipped and adored Him as very God of very God. He preached His person with all clearness of language and warmth of love. The Christ of God was all in all to Paul.

The apostle spoke equally clearly upon the Redeemer's *work*, especially laying stress upon His death. "Horrible!" said the Jew, "How can you boast in a Man who died a felon's death and was cursed because He was hanged on a tree!" "Ah," said the Greek, "tell us no more about your God that died! Babble no longer about resurrection. We never shall believe such unmitigated foolishness." But Paul did not, therefore, put these things into the background and say, "Gentlemen, I will begin with telling

you of the life of Christ and of the excellency of His example—and by these means I shall hope to tempt you onward to the conclusion that there was something divine in Him and then afterwards to the further conclusion that He made an atonement for sin." No, he began with His blessed person and distinctly described Him as he had been taught by the Holy Spirit. And as to His crucifixion, he put it in the front and made it the main point. He did not say, "Well, we will leave the matter of His death for a time," or, "We will consider it under the aspect of a martyrdom by which He completed His testimony." No. Paul gloried in the crucified Redeemer, the dead and buried Christ, the sin-bearing Christ, the Christ made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." This was the subject to which he confined himself at Corinth—beyond this he would not stir an inch. He does not merely determine to keep his preaching to that point, but he resolves not even to know any other subject. He would keep his mind fast closed among them to any thought but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Very unwise this must have seemed. Call in a council of worldly wise men and they will condemn such a rash course, for, in the first place, such preaching would drive away all the Jews. Holding, as the Jews did, the Old Testament Scriptures and receiving, therefore, a great deal of teaching about the Messiah and holding very firmly to the unity of the Godhead, the Jews had gone a long way towards the light—and if Paul had kept back the objectionable points a little while, might he not have drawn them a little further—and so by degrees have landed them at the cross? Wise men would have remarked upon the hopefulness of the Israelites, if handled with discretion, and their advice would have been, "We do not say, renounce your sentiments, Paul, but disguise them for a little while. Do not say what is untrue, but at the same time be a little reticent about what is true, or else you will drive away these hopeful Jews." The apostle yielded to no such policy. He would not win either Jew or Gentile by keeping back the truth, for he knew that such converts are worthless. If the man who is near the kingdom will be driven right away from the gospel by hearing the unvarnished truth, that is no guide as to Paul's duty. He knows that the gospel must be a "savor of death unto death" to some as well as of "life unto life" unto others and therefore whichever may occur, he must deliver his own soul. Consequences are not for Paul, but for the Lord. It is ours to speak the truth boldly and in every case we shall be a sweet savor unto God. But to compromise, in the hope of making converts, is to do evil that good may come—and this is never to be thought of for an instant.

Another would say, "But, Paul, if you do this, you cause opposition. Do you not know that Christ crucified is a byword and a reproach to all thinking men? Why, at Corinth there are a number of philosophers and I tell you, it will create unbounded ridicule if you so much as open your mouth about the Crucified One and His resurrection. Do not you remember on Mars' Hill how they mocked you when you spoke upon that theme? Do not provoke their contempt. Argue with their Gnosticism and show them that you too are a philosopher. Be all things to all men. Be

learned among the learned and rhetorical among the orators. By these means you will make many friends and by degrees your conciliatory conduct will bring them to accept the gospel." The apostle shakes his head, puts down his foot, and with firm voice utters his decision, "I have *determined*," he says, "I have already made up my mind. Your counsels and advice are lost upon me. I have *determined* to know nothing among the Corinthians—however learned the Gentile portion of them may be, or however fond of rhetoric—save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." He stands to that.

It is further worthy of note that the apostle had resolved that his subject should so engross the attention of his hearers that he would not even speak it with excellence of speech or garnish it with man's wisdom. You have heard perhaps of the famous painter who drew the likeness of James I. He represented him sitting in a bower with all the flowers of the season blooming around him—and nobody ever took the smallest notice of the king's visage for all eyes were charmed by the excellence of the flowers. Paul resolved that he would have no flowers at all. The portrait which he sketched would be Christ crucified, the bare facts and doctrine of the cross without so much as a single flower from the poets or the philosophers. Some of us need not be very loud in our resolution to avoid fine speech, for we may have but slender gifts in that direction. But the apostle was a man of fine natural powers and of vast attainments—a man whom the Corinthian critics could not have despised—and yet he threw away all ornaments to let the unadorned beauty of the cross win its own way.

As he would not add flowers, so he would not darken the cross with smoke, for there is a way of preaching the gospel amid a smother of mystification and doubt so that men cannot receive it. A numerous band of men are always boiling and stirring up a huge philosophic caldron which steams with dense vapor, beclouding the cross of Christ most horribly. Alas for that wisdom which conceals the wisdom of God, it is the guiltiest form of folly. Some people preach Christ as I have seen representations of a man-of-war ship in battle. The painter painted nothing but the smoke and you have said, "Where is the ship?" Well, if you looked long you might discern a fragment of the top of one of the masts and perhaps a portion of the boom. The ship was there, no doubt, but the smoke concealed it. So there may be Christ in some men's preaching, but there is such a cloud of thinking, such a dense pall of profundity, such a horrid smoke of philosophy that you cannot see the Lord. Paul painted beneath a clear sky. He would have no learned obscurity. He determined not to know how to speak after the manner of the orators, not to know how to think deeply according to the mode of the philosophers, but only to know Jesus Christ and Him crucified—and just to set Him forth in His own natural beauties unadorned. He dispensed with those accessories which are so apt to attract the eyes of the mind from the central point—Christ crucified. "A rash experiment," says one. Ah, brethren, it is the experiment of faith and faith is justified of all her children. If we rely upon the power of mere persuasion, we rely upon that which is born of the flesh. If

we depend upon the power of logical argument, we again rely upon that which is born of men's reason. If we trust to poetic expressions and attractive turns of speech, we look to carnal means. But if we rest upon the naked omnipotence of a crucified Savior, upon the innate power of the wondrous deed of love which was consummated upon Calvary—and if we believe that the Spirit of God will make this the instrument for the conversion of men, the experiment cannot possibly end in failure.

But oh, my brethren, what a task this must have been for Paul! He was not like many of us who are neither familiar with philosophy, nor capable of oratory. He was so great a master of both that he must have found it necessary to keep himself constantly in check. I think I can see him, every now and then—when a deeply intellectual thought has come across his mind and a beautiful mode of utterance has suggested itself—reining himself up and saying to his mind, "I will leave these deep thoughts for the letter to the Romans. I will give them all this in the eighth chapter. But as for these Corinthians, they shall have nothing but Christ crucified, for they are so carnal, so grossly slavish before talent that they will run away with the idea that my excellent way of putting the truth was the power of it. They shall have Christ only—and only Christ. They are children and I must speak to them as such. They are mere babes in Christ and have need of milk—and milk alone must I give them. They claim to be clever and learned but they are conceited, high-minded, full of divisions and controversies. I will give then nothing but 'the old, old story of Jesus and His love,' and I will tell them that story simply as to a little child." Boundless love to their souls thus made him concentrate his testimony upon the one central point of Jesus crucified.

Thus I have shown you what his subject was.

II. Now, secondly, ALTHOUGH PAUL THUS CONCENTRATED HIS ENERGIES UPON ONE POINT OF TESTIMONY, IT WAS QUITE SUFFICIENT FOR HIS PURPOSE. If the apostle had aimed at pleasing an intelligent audience, Christ and Him crucified would not have done at all. If again he had designed to set himself up as a profound teacher, he would naturally have looked out for something new, something a little more dazzling than the person and work of the Redeemer. And if Paul had desired, as I am afraid some of my brothers do, to collect together a class of highly independent minds which is, I believe, the euphemism for freethinkers—to draw together a select church of the men of culture and intellect, which generally means a club of men who despise the gospel—he certainly would not have kept to preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This order of men would deny him all hope of success with such a theme. They would assure him that such preaching would only attract the poorer sort and the less educated—the servant maids and the old women. But Paul would not have been disconcerted by such observations, for he loved the poorest and feeblest souls and besides, he knew that what had exercised power over his own educated mind was likely to have power over other intelligent people, and so he kept to the doctrine of the cross, believing that he had therein an instrument which would effectually accomplish his one desire with all classes of men. Brethren, what

did Paul wish to do? Paul desired, first of all, to awaken sinners to a sense of sin—and what has ever accomplished this so perfectly as the doctrine that sin was laid upon Christ and caused His death? The sinner, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, sees at once that sin is not a trifle that it is not to be forgiven without atonement, but must be followed by penalty, borne by someone or other. When the guilty one has seen the Son of God bleeding to death in pangs unutterable in consequence of his sin, he has learned that sin is an enormous and crushing burden. If even the Son of God cries out beneath it, if His death agony rends the heavens and shakes earth, what an awful evil sin must be. What must it involve upon my soul if in my own person I shall be doomed to bear its consequences? Thus the sinner rightly argues and thus is he aroused to a sense of guilt.

But Paul wanted also to awaken in the minds of the guilty that humble hope which is the great instrument of leading men to Jesus. He desired to make them hope that forgiveness might be given consistently with justice. Oh, brethren, Christ crucified is the one ray of light that can penetrate the thick darkness of despair and make a penitent heart hope for pardon from the righteous Judge. Need a sinner ever doubt when he has once seen Jesus crucified? When he understands that there is pardon for every transgression through the bleeding wounds of Jesus, is not the best form of hope at once kindled in his bosom and is he not led to say, "I will arise and go unto my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned"?

Paul longed, yet further, to lead men to actual faith in Jesus Christ. Now, faith in Jesus Christ can only come by preaching Jesus Christ. Faith comes by hearing, but the hearing must be upon the subject concerning which the faith is to deal. Would you make believers in Christ, preach Christ. The things of Christ, applied by the Spirit, lead men to put their reliance upon Christ. Nor was that all. Paul wanted men to forsake their sins and what should lead them to hate evil as much as seeing the sufferings of Jesus on account of it? You and I know the power of a bleeding Savior to make us take revenge upon sin. What indignation, what searching of heart, what stern resolve, what bitterness of regret, what deep repentance have we felt when we have seen that our sins became the nails, the hammer, the spear, yes, the executioners of the Well-Beloved?

And Paul longed to train up in Corinth a church of consecrated men, full of love, full of self-denial, a holy people, zealous for good works. And let me ask you, what is more necessary to preach to any man to promote his sanctification and his consecration than Jesus Christ who has redeemed us and so made us forever His servants? What argument is stronger than the fact that we are not our own, for we are bought with a price? I say that Paul had, in Christ crucified, a subject equal to his objective. He had a subject that would meet the case of every man, however degraded or however cultured, and a subject which would be useful to men in the first hours of the new birth and equally useful when they were made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. He had a subject for today and tomorrow, and a subject for next year, for

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He had in the crucified Jesus a subject for the prince's palace and a subject for the peasant's hut, a subject for the market place and a subject for the academy, for the heathen temple and for the synagogue. Wherever he might go, Christ would be both to Jew and Gentile, to bond and free, the wisdom of God and the power of God—and that not to one form of beneficial influence alone—but unto full salvation to everyone that believes.

III. But I must pass on to a third remark, that THE APOSTLE'S CONFINING HIMSELF TO THIS SUBJECT COULD NOT POSSIBLY DO HARM. You know, brethren, that when men dwell exclusively upon one thing they get pretty strong there, but they generally become very weak in other points. Hence a man of one thought only is generally described as riding a hobby. Well, this was Paul's hobby, but it was a sort of hobby which a man may ride without any injury to himself or his neighbor. He will be none the less a complete man if he surrenders himself wholly and only to this one theme.

But let me remark that Christ crucified is the only subject of which this can be said. Let me show you that it is so. You know a class of ministers who preach doctrine—and doctrine only. Their mode of preaching resembles the counting of your fingers—"one, two, three, four, five," and for a variety, "five, four, three, two, one"—always a certain set of great truths and no others. What is the effect of this ministry? Well, generally to breed a generation of men who think they know everything, but really do not know much—very decided and so far, so good—but very narrow, very exclusive, very bigoted and so far, so bad. You cannot preach doctrine alone without contracting your own mind and that of your hearers.

There are others who preach experience only. They are very good people. I am not condemning either them or their doctrinal friends, but they also fall into mischief. Some of them take the lower scale of experience and they tell us that nobody can be a child of God unless he feels the horrible character of his inbred sin and groans daily. We used to hear a good deal of that some years ago; there is less of it now. Am I wrong in saying that this teaching trains up a race of men who show their humility by sitting in judgement upon all who cannot groan down to as deep a note as they can?

Another class has lately arisen who preach experience, but theirs is always upon the high key. They soar aloft, as I think, a little in the balloon line. They own only the bright side of experience. They have nothing to do with its darkness and death. For them there are no nights and they sing through perpetual summer days. They have conquered sin and they have ignored themselves. *So they say,* but we should not have thought so if they had not told us so; on the contrary, we might have fancied that they had a very vivid idea of themselves and their own attainments. I hope I am mistaken, but it has appeared to some of us poor fallible beings that in some beloved brethren self has grown marvelously big of late. Certainly their conversations and preaching largely consist of very wonderful declarations of their own admirable condition. I should be pleased to learn of their progress in grace, *if it is real,* but I had sooner have made

the discovery myself, or have heard it from somebody besides themselves, for there is an inspired proverb which says, "Let another praise you, and not your own lips," and for my part, if any other man thought it right to praise me, I would rather that he held his tongue, for man-magnifying is a poor business. Let the Lord alone be magnified. I think it is clear that grave faults arise from exclusively preaching an inner life instead of preaching Christ, who is life itself.

Another class of ministers have preached the precepts and little else. We need these men as we need the others—they are all useful and act as antidotes to each other—but their ministries are not complete. If you hear preaching about duty and command, it is very proper. But if it is the only theme, the teaching becomes very legal in the long run. And after a while, the true gospel, which has the power to make us keep the precepts, gets flung into the background—and the precepts are not kept after all. Do, do, do, generally ends in nothing being done.

If a brother were to undertake to preach the ordinances only, like those who are always extolling what they are pleased to call the holy sacraments—well, you know where that teaching goes—it has a tendency towards the southeast—and its chosen line runs across the city of Rome.

Moreover, beloved brother, even if you preach Jesus Christ, you must not keep to any other phase of Him but that which Paul took, namely, "Him crucified," for under no other aspect may you exclusively regard Him. For instance, the preaching of the Second Advent, which in its place and proportion is admirable, has been by some taken out of its place, and made the end-all and be-all of their ministry. That, you see, is not what Paul had selected and it is not a safe selection. In many cases, sheer fanaticism has been the result of exclusively dwelling upon prophecy and probably more men have gone mad on that subject than on any other religious question. Whether any man could ever become fanatical about Christ crucified I cannot say, I have never heard of such an instance. Whether a man ever went insane with love to the crucified Redeemer I do not know, but I have never met such a case. If I should ever go crazy, I should like it to be in that direction, and I should like to bite a great many more, for what a blessed subject it would be for one to be carried away with—to become unreasonably absorbed in Christ crucified—to have gone out of your senses with faith in Jesus. The fact is, it never can injure the mind, it is a doctrine which may be heard forever and will be always fresh, new, and suitable to the whole of our manhood.

I say that the keeping to this doctrine cannot do hurt and the reason is this—it contains all that is vital within itself. Keep within the limits of Christ, and Him crucified, and you have brought before men all the essentials for this life and for the life to come. You have given them the root out of which may grow both branch and flower and fruit of holy thought, word, and deed. Let a man know Christ crucified and he knows Him who to know is life eternal. This is a subject which does not awaken one part of the man and send the other part to sleep. It does not kindle his imagination and leave his judgement uninstructed, nor feed his intellect and starve his heart. There is not a faculty of our nature but what Christ cru-

cified affects for good. The perfect manhood of Christ crucified affects mind, heart, memory, imagination, thought, everything. As in milk there are all the ingredients necessary for sustaining life, so in Christ crucified there is everything that is needed to nurture the soul. Even as the hand of David's chief minstrel touched every chord of his ten-stringed harp, so Jesus brings sweet music out of our entire manhood.

There is also this to be said about preaching Christ exclusively, that it will never produce animosities. It will not impregnate men's minds with questions and contentions as those nice points do which some are so fond of dealing with. When certain questions are settled by my judgement and by your judgement, and by a third and a fourth man's judgement, a contest is sure to ensue. But he who stands at Christ's cross and stays there, he stands where he may embrace the whole brotherhood of true Christians, for we are perfectly joined together in one mind and judgement there. There is no vaunting of man's judgement at the cross. "I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Christ," comes from not keeping to Jesus crucified. But if we keep to the cross as guilty sinners needing cleansing through the precious blood and finding all our salvation there, we shall not have time to set ourselves up as religious leaders and to cause divisions in the church of Christ. Was there ever yet a sect created in Christendom by the preaching of Christ crucified? No, my brethren, sects are created by the preaching of something over and above this, but this is the soul and marrow of Christianity and consequently, the perfect bond of love which holds Christians together.

IV. I shall not say more, but pass on to my last reflection, which is this—Because then Paul made this his one sole subject among the Corinthians and he did no hurt by doing so, which cannot be said of any other subject, I COMMEND TO YOU THAT WE SHOULD, ALL OF US, MAKE THIS THE MAIN SUBJECT OF OUR THOUGHTS, PREACHING, AND EFFORTS.

Unconverted men and women, to you I speak first. To you I have nothing else to preach but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Paul knew there were great sinners at Corinth, for it was common all over the then world to call a licentious man a Corinthian. They were a people who pushed laxity and lasciviousness of manners to the greatest possible excess, yet among them Paul knew nothing but Christ and Him crucified, because all that the greatest sinner can possibly need is to be found there. You have nothing in yourself, sinner, and you need not wish for anything to carry to Jesus. You tell me you know nothing about the profound doctrines of the gospel—you need not know them when coming to Christ. The one thing you need to know is this—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world to save sinners and whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. I shall be glad for you to be further instructed in the faith and to know the heights and depths of that love which passes knowledge, but just now the one thing you need to know is Jesus Christ crucified. If you never get beyond that, if your mind should be of so feeble a cast that anything deeper than this you would never be able to grasp, I for one shall feel no distress whatever—for you will have

found that which will deliver you from the power of sin and from the punishment of it—and that which will take you up to heaven to dwell where that same Jesus who was crucified sits enthroned at the right hand of God. Oh, dear broken heart, if you will ever find healing, it is in those wounds. If you ever find rest, you must have it from those pierced hands. If you ever hear absolution, it must be spoken from those same lips which said so sweetly, "It is finished." God forbid that we should know anything among sinners except Christ and Him crucified. Look to Him and Him only, and you shall find rest unto your souls.

As for you, my brethren and sisters who know Christ, I have this to say to you—keep this to the front and nothing else but this, for it is against this that the enemy rages. That part of the line of battle which is most fiercely assailed by the enemy is sure to be that which he knows to be most important to carry. Men hate those they fear. The antagonism of the enemies of the gospel is mainly against the cross. From the very first it was so. They cried, "Let Him come down from the cross and we will believe in Him." They will write us pretty lives of Christ and tell us what an excellent man He was, and do our Lord such homage as their Judas' lips can afford Him. They will also take His Sermon on the Mount and say what a wonderful insight He had into the human heart, and what a splendid code of morals He taught, and so on. "We will be Christians" they say, "but the dogma of atonement we utterly reject." Our answer is, we do not care one farthing what they have to say about our Master if they deny His substitutionary sacrifice. Whether they give Him wine or vinegar is a small question so long as they reject the claims of the Crucified. The praises of unbelievers are sickening. Who needs to hear polluted lips lauding *Him*? Such sugared words are very like those which came out of the mouth of the devil when he said, "You Son of the Highest," and Jesus rebuked him and said "Hold your peace and come out of him." Even thus would we say to unbelievers who extol Christ's life—"Hold your peace! We know your enmity, disguise it as you may. Jesus is the Savior of men or He is nothing. If you will not have Christ crucified you cannot have Him at all." My brothers in Jesus, let us glory in the blood of Jesus. Let it be conspicuous as though it were sprinkled upon the lintel and the two side posts of our doors. And let the world know that redemption by blood is written upon the innermost tablets of our hearts.

Brethren, this is the test point of every teacher. When a fish goes bad, they say it first stinks at the head and certainly when a preacher becomes heretical, it is always about Christ. If he is not clear about Jesus crucified and you hear one sermon from him—that is your misfortune. But if you go and hear him again, and hear another like the first, it will be your fault. Go a third time, and it will be your crime. If any man is doubtful about Christ crucified, recollect Hart's couplet, for it is a truth—

"You cannot be right in the rest.
Unless you think rightly of Him."

I do not need to examine men upon all the doctrines of the Westminster Assembly's Confession. I begin here, "What do you think of Christ?" If you cannot answer that question, go and publish your own views where

you like, but you and I are wide as the poles asunder. Neither do I wish to have fellowship with you. We must have plain speaking here.

It is "Christ crucified" which God blesses to conversion. God blessed William Huntingdon to the conversion of souls—I am sure of that, though I am no Huntingdonian. He blessed John Wesley to the conversion of souls. I am quite as clear about that, though I am not a Wesleyan. The point upon which the Lord blessed them both was that in which they bore testimony to Christ—and you shall find that in proportion as Jesus Christ's atonement is in a sermon, it is the lifeblood of that sermon—and is that which God sanctifies to the conversion of the souls of men. Therefore keep it always prominent.

And I ask you now, my brethren, one more thing. Is not Christ and Him crucified the thing to live on and the thing to die on? Worldlings can live upon their flimsies. They can delight themselves under their Jonah's gourds while they last. But when a man is depressed in spirit and tortured in body, where does he look? If he is a Christian, where does he fly? Where, indeed, but to Jesus crucified? How often have I been glad to creep into the temple and stand in the poor publican's shoes and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," looking only to that Mercy Seat which Jesus sprinkled with His precious blood? This will do to *die* with. I do not believe we shall die seeking consolation from our peculiar church organizations. Nor shall we die grasping with a dying clutch either ordinance or doctrine by itself. Our soul must live and die on Jesus crucified. Notice all the saints, when they die, whether they do not get back to Calvary's great sacrifice. They believed a great many things. Some of them had many crotchets and whims and oddities, but the main point comes uppermost in death. "Jesus died for me, Jesus died for me"—they all come to that. Well, where they get at last, do you not think it would be well to go at first? And if that is the bottom of it all, and it certainly is, would it not be as well for us to keep to that? While some are glorying in this and some in that, some have this form of worship and some that, let us say, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me and I unto the world."

Brethren, I commend to you more and more the bringing of the cross of Christ into prominence, because it is this which will weld us more and more closely to one another and will keep us in blessed unity. We cannot all understand those peculiar truths which depend very much upon nice points and shades of meaning in the Greek which only critics can bring out. If you are going in for these pretty things, brother, you must leave behind many of us poor fools, for we cannot go in for these things, and you only puzzle us. I know you have got that dainty point very beautifully in your own mind and you think a great deal of it, and I do not wonder, for it has cost you a good deal of thinking and it shows your powerful discernment. At the same time, do you not think you ought to condescend to some of us who never will, as long as ever we live, take up with these knotty points? Some of our brains are of an ordinary sort. We have to earn our bread and we mingle with ordinary people. We know that two times two will make four, but we are not acquainted with all the ambigu-

ous principles which lie concealed in the lofty philosophy to which you have climbed. I do not know much about it. I do not climb to such elevations myself, and I shall never get up there along with you—might it not be better for the unity of the faith that you would kindly leave some of these things alone, agree better with your friends at home, show more love to your fellow Christians, and attend a little more to commonplace duties? I do not know but what it might do you good, and bring a little of your humility to the front, if you get down there with Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Personally I might know a host of things—I especially might, for everybody tries to teach me something. I get advice by the wagonload—one pulls this ear and one pulls that. Well, I might know a great deal, but I find I should have to leave some of you behind if I went off to these things—and I love you too well for that. I am determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. If any man will keep to that, I will say, "Give me your hand, my brother. Jesus washed it with His blood as He did mine. Come, brother, let us look up together at the same cross. What do you make of it?" There is a tear in your eye, and there is one in mine, but yet there is a flush of joy upon both our faces because of the dear love that nailed Jesus there. "What shall we do in the sight of this cross?" My brother says, "I will go and win souls," and I say, "So will I." He says, "I have one way of speaking," and I reply, "I have another, for our gifts differ, but we will never clash, for we are serving one Lord and one Master and we will not be divided, either in this world or in that which is to come." Let Apollos say what he likes, or Paul, or Peter—we will learn from them all and be very glad to do so—but still, from the cross we will not move, but stand fast there—for Jesus is the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Corinthians 2.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—425, 483, 433.

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THE ETERNAL TRUTH OF GOD
NO. 1265

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 6, 1875,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The truth endures to all generations."
Psalm 100:5.

IT was very solemn work this morning to lay bare the sin of unbelief. [Sermon #1207, Volume 20, *A Solemn Impeachment of Unbelievers*.] It was the burden of the Lord to him who had to speak, and it could have been but very small pleasure to those who had to listen. Nevertheless, I trust it was something better than pleasure to many and it drove their souls to pray to God for others. By His grace sinners were moved, as we already know, to yield up their hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ. After meditating upon the heinousness of this sin—the sin of making God a liar—after even thinking of it, horror took hold upon my soul and it seemed to me that we ought to have a supplementary sermon tonight in honor of the truth of God. As we have, as it were, cleansed the temple and swept out the dreadful filthiness of giving the Lord the lie, it is now our part to offer a sweet smelling offering by declaring the faithfulness of the Lord. It is my earnest desire that each one of us may join in the devout exercise and bear our witness that, as far as we have known the Lord, He has been a God of truth to us. We will also rehearse the scriptural testimony to this great and certain fact that God cannot lie—and meditate upon the evidence that in Him, and in all His actions, faithfulness shines in the highest possible perfection. I desire in the courts of the Lord's house, and in the midst of His people, to extol Him whose counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.

We will consider only two points, though those will subdivide into many others, and the first is, that according to the text and according to fact, *God is true.* And, secondly, that *God is true in all generations*.

I. First, then, GOD IS TRUE. *He is true in His very nature*. There is no deceit, falsehood, or error in the essential nature of God. It could not be. We, from our very birth, have deceitful hearts, deceitful above all things, and in us the old serpent who deceived our first parents has fearfully perverted our judgement and turned aside our souls from their integrity. As a result, we often put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. And frequently we believe a lie and reject the truth. But God is not a man that He should lie. His very name is, "The Lord God, abundant in goodness and truth." This is only a part of His holiness. The angels could not cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth," if God were not true. Admit for a single moment, untruthfulness on the part of God, and you have at once destroyed the wholeness, or holiness, of His ever blessed and adorable

character. What makes men untruthful? Whatever it may be, it is clear that nothing of the kind can operate with God. When a man tells a lie, it is often through fear—fear of the consequences of the truth. But the eternal Jehovah cannot dread consequences—He is omnipotent—all things are in His hands. When a man utters a lie, he frequently does so because he thinks there is no other way of accomplishing his end. But the infinite wisdom of God is never short of resources—He knows how to accomplish His will and pleasure without adopting the mean devices and paltry schemes of poor pitiful man. Man sometimes promises what he cannot perform and then he is false to his promise. But that can never be the case with the Almighty who has but to speak and it is done—to command and it stands fast. Falsehood is the wickedness—I dare not call it the infirmity—the wickedness of little natures. But as for the Great Supreme, you cannot conceive Him acting in any manner that is otherwise than straightforward, upright, and truthful. He is essentially a God of truth and righteousness. He must be so.

The Lord our God is not only true *in* His nature, but He is true *to His nature*. We are not always true to ourselves. I have known a generous man who, in a fit of bad temper, has acted very ungenerously. I have known a man universally admitted to be just and upright who, nevertheless, under pressure, has stooped to an action which he could not justify. And we have read of persons exceedingly kind by nature who, nevertheless, have perpetrated cruel deeds in times of fear. They were not true to themselves. They did actions of which any candid person would say, "This is not like the man—we are astonished that he should do this. He seems to have stepped out of his ordinary path to do a something altogether foreign to his better nature." But the Lord is always true to Himself. You never find Him doing anything that is not godlike. Select the acts of His creation. If He makes an aphid to creep upon a rosebud, you will find traces of infinite wisdom in it—you shall submit the insect to the microscope and discern a wisdom in it as glorious as that which shines in yonder rolling stars. If in providence some minor event comes under your notice, in that event you shall find no deviation from the constant rule of right and love by which the Most High characterizes all His doings. There are no emergencies with God in which He could be driven to act an untruth. There are no pressures, no difficulties, no infirmities which could produce falsehood in Him. "I am Jehovah: I change not," He says. Find Him where you will, He is what He was and what He ever shall be—the eternal and ever glorious I AM, over whom circumstances can have no kind of influence—who, indeed, knows nothing of circumstances, for He fills all places, and all times and all ages are present with Him. As for the creatures, they are as nothing in His sight and He is all in all. Ever true, ever true by nature, and true to His nature is the Lord our God, and adored be His thrice holy name. By Jesus Christ, we present to You, O Jehovah, our adoring praise!

Let us further notice that *God is true in action*. He has been true to the first transaction of which we are aware, namely, *the making of the eternal*

covenant. What God has done in the eternity which we call the past (but which to Him is as the present), we do not fully know. We have no reason to believe that we know much of what God has done. There may be as many other worlds and sorts of beings existent as there are sands upon the sea shore, for all we know. And the Lord may have been occupied in ages past with thousands of glorious plans and economies as yet unrevealed to man. We cannot tell what He does or what He has done. We are creatures of a day and know nothing. We are like insects that are born on a leaf and die amid our fellows at the setting of the sun—but He lives on forever. We talk of the "eternal hills," but they are babes that were born yesterday, as far as He is concerned. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting You are God." We say, "Roll on, you ancient ocean!" but the ocean is not ancient—it is a drop that fell yesterday from the tip of the Creator's finger.

We cannot tell all that the Lord did in the past, but we are told in Scripture that He made a covenant in the olden time with His Son and with us also, who are believers in His Son. And in that covenant the chief point was that He would give His Son to be a ransom for many—that Jesus Christ should lay down His life for His sheep and give Himself for His church. That was the most astounding promise that was ever made. Indeed, all the promises made to men are couched in that. Did He keep it? Did He take the darling of His bosom, the pure and holy Christ, and send Him down to earth to be made in the likeness of sinful flesh? Did He submit that His peer, His equal, the Son of the Highest, should wear the smock frock of a peasant and live among the sons of men as a carpenter's son? Did He fulfill that wondrous Word and allow that dear Son of His to be nailed to a cross—to die on that gibbet like a common felon? Did He permit Him to slumber in the dust among the dead? He did. Let Bethlehem and Calvary say, "The Lord is true. He has kept His covenant"—

"True to His word, He gave His Son
To die for crimes which men have done.
Blest pledge! He never will revoke
A single promise He has spoke."

But it was a stipulation of that covenant on the Lord's side that Jesus Christ should have a people who would be His reward for His sufferings. The Father gave to Christ a chosen people—His sheep, His bride. These were to be His. "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." Has the divine Father kept that part of His covenant? Beloved, He is keeping it every day. By the preaching of the gospel and by other means in the hand of the Spirit, those for whom Jesus died are being called from among the mass of mankind. They are reconciled to God by the death of Jesus and they are saved. And whenever these present themselves before the throne of God, He looks upon them as forgiven, regards them as one with His beloved Son and members of the body of Christ—and therefore He accepts them in the Beloved. For Christ's sake, He preserves them. For Christ's sake, He sanctifies them. For Christ's

sake, He will, by-and-by, glorify them. The covenant of grace has many promises in it, but not one of them has failed. As on Christ's side, the covenant was kept by His death, so on the Father's side, the covenant has been kept by the salvation of those whom Jesus redeemed from among men whom He gave Himself a ransom for many. Oh, beloved, if it could be proven that the covenant of grace had failed. If there had been the smallest faltering in the fulfillment of this divine treaty, then might we speak with bated breath concerning the truthfulness of God, and the sinner would not be so guilty when he makes God a liar. But because in this grand covenant transaction, God has not swerved by so much as one jot or tittle from His promise, let His name be blessed! Praise Him, all you saints in heaven! Praise Him, you saints on earth, for, "His truth endures to all generations."

God being thus true *in* His nature and true *to* His nature—and true to His covenant—*He has been true to all His purposes*. Whatever God resolved to do, He has done. Whatever He decreed has come to pass. There has been no change in the purpose of God at any time. Straight forward He goes and none can hinder Him. The opposition of men and the opposition of devils are as nothing—these can no more change His plans than an infant's breath could alter the course of the sun. "Has He said and shall He not do it?" Who are you that hopes to thwart the designs of God? What He resolves to do, who shall dare to censure, much less to oppose? Who is he that shall say unto the Lord, "Your arm is short. You are not able to accomplish Your work"? Behold, His will is omnipotence and He does as He pleases among the angels of heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world. From the time He planned the whole scheme of providence and grace, nothing has ever made Him alter so much as one single line of it. There it stands, and He is true to it and true He will be, till like a vesture, He shall fold up creation as a worn-out mantle which has answered its wearer's end.

This leads us to remark that *God is true to His promises*. There is not a promise which God has made, but what either He has kept it, or else, being dated for the future, He will keep it when the time appointed comes. Whatever He has said to the sons of men He has meant. How sadly common it is for men to make engagements in public while, in the long run, they never intend to do anything of the sort. How many promises are made to please the ear and cheat the heart? Blessed be the Lord, it is not so with Him. I love that passage in which it is written, "I have not spoken in secret, in the dark places of the earth. I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek you My face in vain." There are no mental reservations and Jesuitical equivocations with God—there is nothing in His secret purpose which will contradict the promise which He has given. When He says to the wicked, "You shall surely die," He means it. But when He says, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool," He means it. And when He says, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," it is not mere talk. It is reality. He means it. He is "the Lord God, merciful and gra-

cious, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." There is truth in what He says and He fulfils it. Oh, how many of us there are here who can tell of the pardoning mercy of God! We have been forgiven. We have been saved. We sought the Lord and He heard us. We cried unto Him and He answered us. We came before Him with no plea except the blood of Jesus and He said, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins, which are many, are forgiven you." Blessed be His name. His promises are true. Now, child of God, I want you to note this upon the tablets of your heart. Be sure of it. For on your assurance of God's truthfulness very much depends. You cannot call out to God and be accepted if you have any suspicion of the divine veracity, for "without faith it is impossible to please Him." Do not play with God's promises. Do not say, "I hope they are true." You have no business to hope about it. They *are* true. Do not go with a promise on your lips and say, "Lord, I sometimes hope that this will be fulfilled." No, but say, "Lord, I know You cannot lie. You have said it and You will do it. As the pitcher hangs on the nail, so do I hang upon Your truth." God deserves to be treated with unbounded confidence. Sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than one promise of our God shall fall to the ground.—

"He will not His great self-deny;
A God all truth can never lie;
As well might be His being quit
As break His oath or word forget."

Now, as He is thus true to His secret purposes and true to His promises, I may add that *He is true to all His published Word,* which He has made known to us in Holy Scripture. The Bible, having in it testimonies from God, is not a book for yesterday, nor shall it be merely a book for today, but for all time. It stands and must stand fast forever. Did the law condemn sin? It condemns it still. Did the gospel provide pardon 1,800 years ago? It does so still. Is there a promise that believers shall be saved? They are saved still. Is there a declaration that unbelievers shall be damned? Damned they must be, for that word can never alter. Of every gracious declaration of the Most High we may sing—

"Engraved as in eternal brass
The mighty promise shines,
Nor can the powers of darkness erase
Those everlasting lines."

Every word of God is true and stands fast like the pillars of heaven. Neither can it ever be changed—rest assured of this.

Further, let me assure you tonight that *God is true in every relation that He sustains*. Is He a King? The kingcraft of God is not like that of many princes who think that their ambassadors ought to be sent abroad to tell lies for the good of their countrymen at home. No, there are no deceits, tricks, or plots with the court of heaven. Nothing of what is called finesse and intrigue enter into the government of God. It is all straightforward with Him and so plain and clear that it baffles villainy, countermines the mining of deceit, and makes the diviners mad. O blessed King upon Your throne, Your courtiers are men of clean hands who love the

truth in their hearts. They dwell with You, but as for liars and deceivers, You have said that they shall be cast into the lake of fire.

The Lord will be true as *a Judge*. When you and I come to be tried before Him, there will be no bribes taken. There will be no inducing of witnesses to commit perjury, no twisting of the law. In righteousness shall He judge the world and His people with equity, for He is just and true in all His ways and will by no means clear the guilty. He will only clear those whom He has made righteous through the righteousness of His Son.

Blessed be His name, He is true as *a Father*. Many fathers are bad fathers—hard, forgetful, selfish—we pity the children who have such parents. They are not fathers at all, in the true sense of the word. But God is a true father, pitying and compassionate, helping and loving and providing for His children.

And He is a true *friend*. There are friends in the world of a sad sort. Friends! Perhaps we have a dozen of them—friends while we have a shilling—but they leave us when our purse is empty or we are under a cloud. "A friend in need is a friend indeed," says our proverb, and such a friend is God, for, oh, how He helps the helpless. How the widow and the fatherless, and those that have no helper, look up to Him. And how in our despair, when we are sorely pressed and crushed under a burden of trouble, we have turned to Him and He has helped us, truly helped us, for He is a practical friend.

But I should tire you if I went through all the relationships in which God sustains us—only I sum up all by saying that He is true and thorough in them all. There is no pretense or mockery with Him.

And I will close this head by saying that *God is true to every man, to every woman in the world*. When you get to the end of life, you will find that everything that God said is true. You may have doubted it, but experience will prove it. You may call Him a liar, as we proved that unbelievers do this morning, but you will find Him true—true to your regret if you die rejecting Him, but assuredly true in all respects. Some dare to charge God with favoritism and I do not know what they will not say. Such things have I heard said about the living God that I will not defile my lips by repeating them. But, sinner, you will find Him to be impartial. Your judgement before God will be so just that you yourself will agree with it. Though it sends you down to hell, you will be obliged, by your speechless confusion, to confess that God has kept His word with you and has dealt out impartial justice. You will not at any time be able to turn round upon Him and say, "This is not what was written in Your Bible. This is not what Your ministers told me. This is not what my conscience tells me should be." No, no, but as it is written, so shall you find it. Do not risk the Lord's driving you forever from His presence, for if you die in unbelief He will do so. If you reject Him, He will reject you. And if you despise His Son, He will despise you. If you will live and die impenitent and unbelieving, you shall be driven from His presence into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth—and He has

told you so. I sometimes pity persons who are brought up before the magistrates for breaking some of our new laws which the magistrates themselves cannot administer and which nobody can understand. The magistrate says, "It is clear you have broken a law," and the man replies, "I did not know it." I pity a man in that case. But you do know the law of the Lord. God's laws have been published, fastened up in your conscience, and printed in the book which is in all your houses. And so if you sin against His commands, you sin against light and knowledge, and you will be utterly without excuse when He calls you to His bar.

There I leave this great truth, having illustrated it in a considerable number of ways. *God is true*.

II. The second head was to be that GOD IS TRUE IN ALL GENERATIONS. This fact breaks up into three heads—in the *past,* in the *present,* and in the *future*.

I should have to detain you here for a long time if I were to go into that first head at any length. God has been true in *the past*. The whole of history, sacred and profane, goes to prove that. Take the beginning of our race. God warned Adam and Eve that if they ate of the forbidden fruit they should surely die. He indicated to them therein a spiritual death, which signifies separation from God. In the day they ate thereof they did die—die as to all spiritual life and Adam, instead of welcoming God, went to hide himself among the trees of the garden and felt that he was naked. God then told him that in the sweat of his face he should eat bread and that his wife should bring forth her children with bitter pangs. Has it not been so? Every man's labor and every woman's travail prove that God is true. But then the Lord came in with a voice of mercy and He said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," and Jesus came, the woman's promised seed, and He has bruised the head of Satan and proclaimed to us salvation through the Man, the Mediator, who is also God over all, blessed forever. The first promise has been kept.

Years rolled on and God destroyed the world with a flood. You know the story. God said He would and He did it. He told Noah to go into the ark and He would save him. Noah went in and God saved him. But when he came out, perhaps Noah was half afraid the world would be destroyed again, and when a shower began to fall, he did not know but what the sluices of heaven had been pulled up again and that once more the floods might come. Presently he saw in the skies that wonderful sight, which I think none of us can look upon without delight—a rainbow, a bow of many colors, not a bloodstained bow, but a bow of joy, many-colored, like streamers of delight—a bow not turned downwards to shoot at us, but upwards, as if we might shoot our prayers up to God upon it—a bow without an arrow, to show that God has not come out to war with men. And what did God say? "I, behold, even I, do set My bow in the cloud, for behold I make a covenant with the world that seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat, shall never fail. And I will no more destroy the earth with a flood." Has He not kept it? Have you not felt winter's cold going through your bones? Did you not sweat with the

heat of summer? Did He not say that He would give you the harvest time and the heat? He has kept His covenant. Every time you see the rainbow in heaven, no, every time you walk upon the earth and find that it is not transformed into one dreary, dreadful, all-devouring sea, you may say to yourself, "God is true."

The world went on and there came an Abraham into the world. And God said, "Get you hence, from your kindred, and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will give it to you and to your seed after you." Abraham believed God and went into a land that he knew nothing of. He found it full of inhabitants and he dwelt among them in tents, wandering up and down. It did not look likely that God would give him that land, nor to his seed after him, for he had no children and he was more than a hundred years old, and his wife was well stricken in years. He had to wait a long time, but Isaac came at last and made glad that household. Four hundred and fifty years went on. Abraham had been gathered to his fathers and yet there was not an Israelite in all Canaan. Not a foot of that land belonged to them except the cave of Machpelah in which the dead patriarch still lay. But the time came for Israel to come up into the Promised Land and they did come. God sent down Moses and told Pharaoh to let His people go, for the time was come and they must go up to their own land. Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice? I will not obey His voice; neither will I let Israel go." But he had to change his tune and bow before the stammering man who spoke for God. God chastened and plagued Egypt till at last they let Israel go—and they did go, though the Red Sea rolled before them—and Pharaoh's host pursued them. They did go, and though the wilderness yielded them no meat, the heavens dropped with manna. They went through the great howling wilderness and failed not for drought, for the rocks gushed with rivers. They did go till they came to Canaan and there they were called to fight with Anakim and giants. And they threw down the battlements of their cities. And they smote the Canaanites with great slaughter, took possession of the land and dwelt therein—every man under his vine and under his fig tree—for the Lord had said it, and the Lord fulfilled it. He gave the land to them and they possessed it in due time.

Thus, you see, I might keep on with history as long as you pleased, but it all goes to show that if God says it, He does it. He said that Edom should become a desolation and the traveler can hardly pass through Petra at this present day. He said that Tyre should become a place for the mending of nets and it is still so in its desolateness. He said that Egypt should be the meanest of all the nations and who that knows Egypt, where the stick is used on almost every man, does not know that no people yield so meanly to a despot's will as the Egyptian race? Everything has happened that the Lord has spoken up to this moment.

Now, instead of taking you back to ancient or modern history, I would like to take you to the history of your mother or of your grandmother. I think of my dear old grandfather and of what he used to say to me. If he

were here tonight—I am glad he is not, because he is in heaven, and that is a much better place for him—but if he could come from heaven and could talk as he used to do when he was here on earth, he would say, "Ah, my boy, I *did* find Him a faithful God." He had a large family and a very small income, but he loved his Lord and he would not have given up his preaching of the gospel for anything, not even for an imperial crown. He had told me often how the Lord provided for him. He had a little farm to get his living upon it and he had a cow which used to give milk for his many children. And one day when he came up to the cow, it fell back with the staggers and died. Grandmother said, "James, how will God provide for the dear children now? What shall we do for milk?" "Mother," he said, "God said He would provide, and I believe that He could send us 50 cows if He pleased." It so happened that on that day a number of gentlemen were meeting in London. Persons whom grandfather did not know were sitting as a committee for the distribution of money to poor ministers, and they had given it to all who had asked for it. My grandfather had never asked for any. He liked to earn his own money. He did not send in any petition or appeal. Well, after the gentlemen had distributed to all who had asked, there was five pounds over and they were considering what they should do with this balance. "Well," said one, "there is a Mr. Spurgeon down at Stambourne, in Essex, a poor minister. He stands in need of five pounds." "Oh," said another, "don't send him five pounds. I will add five to it. I know him. He is a worthy man." "No," said another, "don't send him 10 pounds. I will give another five pounds if somebody else will put a fourth five to it." The next morning came a letter to grandfather with nine pence postage due. Grandmother did not like to pay out nine pence for a letter, but there was 20 pounds in it, and as my grandfather opened it he said, "Now, can't you trust God about an old cow?" These things I tell you and you smile, and well you may, but oh my soul *laughs,* and my face laughs on both sides, when I think how faithful God has been to me. I can tell you about my grandfather, but I will not tell you about myself, for that would be almost as long as the history I spoke of. From the day that I left my father's house to this day, if there is no other man in the world that can speak of the faithfulness of God, I can. I must, I will, and none shall stop me of this glorying. He has never lied unto me, or failed me, or forsaken me, but has kept His word to the moment in every respect. No, I sometimes think He has gone beyond His word and done for me exceedingly abundantly above what I understood Him to promise. He has exceeded my expectations even when my expectations have been at full tide. If I were to invite the brothers round us, one by one, to get up and were to say "Brother, has God kept His word to you in the past? Speak as you have found Him," they would all testify to the Lord's truth. And, oh, it is not merely the brothers, but there are many aged woman here—there are many widows here—there are many poor tried believers here, and as I look round I know the stories of some of you and I know what you would say. It would be, "Blessed be His holy

name, and not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised."

There is the testimony of history, ancient and modern. There is the testimony of the biographies of our ancestors and the testimony of our autobiographies as well. God is true, glory be to His name!

Now, brethren, I was to have said next, that *God is still true*. Not only was He true, but He is true—He is true tonight. He is true tonight. If you want to know that, go down many of our streets in London tonight. Go to the casual ward of the workhouse if you like, and just pick out the vagrants—those that are in rags and poverty. What do you find? In nine cases out of 10, how did they get there? What brought them to poverty? Drink and laziness. And what did God say? "The drunkard and the sluggard shall come to poverty." God said they would and they do. He says, "The sluggard shall clothe himself with rags." Every time I see a sluggard in rags, I say to myself, "God is true. He said it would come to that." He tells us that sin will bring sorrow, and do you not see it everywhere? Most of the misery in the world can be traced to some sin or other—some direct breach of the divine commands. God is true.

On the other hand, look you tonight on many a happy face. If I were to question the man who owns that happy face—what makes you so happy?—he would say, "Because my sins are forgiven me." "How came that about?" "I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and I had the promise that my sins should be forgiven me, and they have been." "You had a burden once, had you not?" "Yes." "And you have got rid of it? Did you go to Jesus Christ's cross with that burden?" "Yes, and I got rid of it just as He said I would." "Did you do anything more than that?" "No, I simply trusted Jesus. He said I should have peace and I have it." "Well, but how about your daily troubles? Do you have any?" "Oh, yes. I do." "I ask you that question because Jesus said, 'In the world you shall have tribulation.' Do you find it so?" "That I do," says one. But then He said, "In Me you shall have peace." Do you find it so, brethren? How was it with you last week when you had all those troubles? Did you enjoy peace, even then? Did you hear Him say, "Let not your hearts be troubled; you believe in God: believe, also, in Me"? And did you believe in Him and find at once that you could cast your burden upon God? Oh, yes, the saints will testify unanimously that whenever they trust God, it is well with their souls. And tonight, as well as in the past, we have a faithful God.

Have we here present tonight any friend in great distress? You have forgotten it, I suppose, during the service, but now you remember that the brunt of the storm will be upon you next Monday. Does this alarm you? You are a child of God and do you think that your Father will leave you in the time of need? No, I will not ask you whether you think so, because it would be a crying shame if you did your Lord such an injustice. If we never doubt our God till we have a cause for it, it will be a long while first. "But it is a new trouble, sir." Yes, but He who was your God of old will help you through the new trial. Go to Him again. "Ah, but I dread the loss of a very dear and precious one." Yes, but as His will is, so

should your will be. God makes all things work together for good. Do you not believe it? All things are moving according to the decree of goodness and wisdom—and you must not doubt it. Like Jacob, you sometimes say, "All these things are against me," but they are not, they are all *for* you. God is ordering all for the best.

Now, last of all, *God will be true*. I do not know how far we have to go before we shall reach our journey's end, but this I do know, the whole of the road that we have to travel is paved with love and faithfulness, and we need not be afraid. We shall soon lie down upon our beds and fall asleep in death. I bless God for that. I said to a brother the other day, "So-and-so has gone home," and the brother replied, "Well, where else should He go?" Where should a child go, when the day is over, but home? It is very sweet to think that the Lord's own children shall all go home, by-and-by. He has promised that we shall be with Him where He is, and we shall find it so. Only, like the Queen of Sheba, we shall be astonished when we get there and we shall say, "The half has not been told us." We shall leave these poor bodies behind in the grave for a while, but they will not be lost. They are old companions of ours on the journey of life and though the worms devour them, yet in our flesh we shall see God. The trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and body and soul, one perfect man, shall "behold the King in His beauty, and the land that is very far off." God has said so and it will be so. We shall leave the church behind us, but God will take care of His church. We need not fret about that—He will not fail her nor forsake her. We shall leave the world behind us and the world is very wicked, but it will not prevail against the truth, for the Lord has said the gates of hell shall not prevail against His church, nor shall they.

We need not be worrying about what will happen when Mr. So-and-so dies. People are always putting the question, "What will they do when their minister is gone?" Do? Trust in God as they did before. God is alive. Martin Luther once said to his friend, when he was fretting and worrying, "When will you leave off trying to govern the world?" And we may say the same to one another when we are anxious and fretful. God does not need any of us. We think ourselves mightily important but we really are no more important to God's plans than the caterpillar in the kitchen garden is to a Napoleon when he is marching his armies across a continent. We are nothings and nobodies, except when God pleases to use us—and He can do better without us than with us many times, for we get in His way. Oh, brethren, matters are all right, for they are in God's hands. The everlasting God lives and He will work His purposes, for He is the true God. The heathen will be converted to Christ, for the Lord has said, "Ask of Me, and I will give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession." "As I live," says the Lord, "surely all flesh shall see the salvation of God." It shall be done. It must be done. Rest sure of it. "The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ." Antichrist on yonder seven hills must be thrown down—the crescent of Mahomet must wane—the gods of

the heathen must be utterly abolished. *Must*, I say, for is it not written, "He must reign till His enemies are made His footstool"? I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet and therefore I do not dare set up a theory of futurity, but this one thing I know—"The Lord reigns"—and the Lord will accomplish His purposes and preserve His church in the world. The truth shall never die and Christ's throne shall never shake, for the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.

Thus have we tried to declare the truthfulness of God. How short of the mighty theme have we fallen! These two words and we have done. Since God is true, you children of God, why do you mistrust Him? Since God is true, you sinners, why do you belie Him by your unbelief? Echo answers, "Why?" And so we leave it. And unto Father, Son and Holy Spirit be glory, forever and ever! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SECTION—Psalm 85.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
100 (VERS. IV), 193; 1009.

THE BAPTIST BULLETIN

THE PILGRIM FATHERS—This is actually a reprint of Brown's work, published in commemoration of the 350th anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock. It would be good for every American (assuming that he would read with an open mind) to read this account of the noble band so indelibly tied in with the origins of our nation. It is interesting to read quotations such as this—"For that the propagation of the gospel is a thing we do profess above all to be our aim in settling this plantation, we have been careful to make plentiful provision of godly ministers, by whose faithful preaching, godly conversation, and exemplary life we trust not only those of our own nation will be built up in the knowledge of God, but also the Indians may, in God's appointed time, be reduced to the obedience of the gospel of Christ." Would that such a purpose would be characteristic of our nation as a whole today!

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

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PAUL'S DOXOLOGY
NO. 1266

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 7, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." Ephesians 3:20, 21.

THIS chapter has a whole service of worship within itself. It certainly contains a sermon, for Paul gives a very earnest address upon the unveiling of the hidden mystery so that the Gentiles are made partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel. It contains a prayer, for one of the verses begins, "For this cause I bow my knees." And in the verses before us, it closes with a hymn, a hymn of incomparable praise. Thus, in the compass of a short chapter, we have all those devout exercises with which our assemblies for worship are familiar, namely—instruction, supplication, and praise. It was meet that the apostle should close the chapter as he does, for the doxology here given grows out of the chapter. It is its natural outcome and crowns the whole, even as the flower of the lily is borne up by the stem, completes it and adorns it. The chapter would have been altogether incomplete without the ascription of praise—not perhaps in its sense, but certainly in its spiritual development. Mount Zion doubtless possessed in itself both glory and beauty, but the temple on its summit constituted its most sacred charm. Even so, to a noble chapter this doxology is a divine climax, adding glory and sanctity to all the rest.

If you look the chapter through, you will see that the apostle has represented the gospel in its various aspects to different persons and generally has set it forth with the word *unto*. In the fifth verse, he speaks of it as manifested *unto the sons of men*. It was not revealed to them in the olden time so clearly as now, but now unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, the gospel is revealed and we live in its clear light, for which we have reason for great thankfulness. It would be a good subject to dwell upon—the relation of the gospel unto the sons of men. The apostle, a little lower down in the eighth verse, speaks of the relation of the gospel *unto himself*, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given." What the gospel may do unto other men is of great importance for us to allow, but the knowledge will little avail us unless we can testify of what it has done unto each one of us personally. All the gold mines of California are of less worth to a man than the money in his own possession. Can you, beloved hearers, speak, each one for himself and say of the gospel—"unto me is this grace given"? Further on, the

apostle speaks of the angels, and in the 10th verse he says, "To the intent that now *unto the principalities and powers* in heavenly places might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." The gospel has a relation to angels—they have always had something to do with it, for of old they desired to look into it. And it is written of our Lord that He was "seen of angels." We know also that they rejoice over penitent sinners, and that they join in those ascriptions of glory which the redeemed in heaven present to the Lamb of God. Yet further, the apostle, without exactly using the word "unto," dwells upon the relation of the gospel *to the people whom he addressed* when he declares that he had prayed to the Lord that He would grant them, according to the richness of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. Thus having mentioned how the gospel bears upon mankind at large, upon inspired men, upon himself, upon angels and then upon the saints to whom he was writing, he turns with a full heart to look at its bearings upon God Himself. And now it is no longer "unto principalities and powers." It is no longer even "unto me," or "unto the holy apostles and prophets." But his theme is *"unto HIM."* I pray God the Holy Spirit to fulfill my desire at this time that every one of us who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, may look wholly *unto the Lord* and spend the little time appointed for our discourse in reverent adoration of Him from whom all grace comes and to whom all the glory ought therefore to return, "for of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things." If unto Him there should be glory in the church throughout all ages, then to Him should there be glory in this church at this present moment. O Lord, help us to render it unto You.

In our text, we have adoration, not prayer; the apostle had done with that. Adoration—not even so much the act of praise as the full sense that praise is due and far more of it than we can render. I hardly know how to describe adoration. Praise is a river flowing on joyously in its own channel, banked up on either side that it may run towards its one object. But adoration is the same river overflowing all banks, flooding the soul, and covering the entire nature with its great waters—and these not so much moving and stirring as standing still in profound repose, mirroring the glory which shines down upon it—like a summer's sun upon a sea of glass. Adoration is not seeking the divine presence, but conscious of it to an unutterable degree and therefore full of awe and peace, like the Sea of Galilee when its waves felt the touch of the sacred feet. Adoration is the fullness, the height and depth, the length and breadth of praise. Adoration seems to me to be as the starry heavens which are always proclaiming the glory of God and yet, "there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." It is the eloquent silence of a soul that is too full for language. Adoration is to prostrate yourself in the dust in humility and yet to soar aloft in sublime thought—to sink into nothing and yet to be so enlarged as to be filled with all the fullness of God. It is to have no thought and yet to be all thought—to lose yourself in God—this is adoration. This should be the frequent state of the renewed mind. We ought to set apart far longer time for this sacred engagement, or what shall we call

it? act or state? It were for our highest enrichment if we made it our daily prayer that the blessed Spirit would frequently bear us right out of ourselves and lift us above all these trifles which surround us till we were only conscious of God and His exceeding glory. Oh that He would plunge us into the Godhead's deepest sea till we were lost in His immensity and could only exclaim in wonder, "Oh, the depths! Oh, the depths!" In that spirit I desire to approach the text and I ask you to turn your eyes away from all else to HIM, even to the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. I do not ask you to remember what the gospel does for you except as you remember it to render praise for it. I do not ask you to contemplate the gospel in its reference to men and angels, but only to consider the Lord Himself and to render Him glory for ability to bless, enrich, and sanctify above all our asking or thinking. Looking to the Lord alone, let us draw near unto Him in spirit and in truth.

I. Our first consideration shall be, UPON WHAT PART OF HIS GLORIOUS CHARACTER SHALL OUR MINDS REST? The text guides us to *the divine ability*. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly." And it selects the divine ability to bless—"to do according to the power that works in us." This, then, is the subject.

What does the apostle say of it? He declares that the divine ability to bless is *above what we ask*. We have asked great things in our time. We remember when it seemed the greatest conceivable thing for us to say, "Father, forgive me." We asked a large thing when we requested the pardon of all our sins and an equally great thing when we prayed to be cleansed in spirit. When we felt our hearts hard and our natures depraved, it seemed almost too great a blessing to expect the heart of stone to be turned to a heart of flesh. We did, however, cry for gracious renewal and the prayer was heard. Full many a time since then, in deep distress, we have besought the Lord for great deliverances. In abject need, we have sought great supplies and in terrible dilemmas, we have asked for great guidance—and we have received all these again and again. The blessings sought and obtained have assuredly been neither few nor small.

Some of us would almost seem to have tried the limit of prayer in the matters for which we have cried unto the Lord. We have, in times of holy boldness and sacred access, asked large things, such as one could only ask of the Great King. And yet our asking has been too short a line to reach the bottom of divine ability—He is able to do above what we ask. Our prayer at its best and boldest has many a boundary. It is limited often by our sense of need. We scarcely know what we need. We need to be taught what we should pray for or we never ask aright. We mistake our condition. We know not how deep and numerous our needs are. Our soul's hunger is not keen enough—sin has taken the edge from our spiritual appetites and therefore we limit and cramp our prayers. But blessed be God, He is not limited by our sense of need. His guests do but ask for bread and water, but behold, His oxen and fatlings are killed and a feast is made of fat things—"of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined."

Yes, and our need itself is limited. We do not need everything. Empty as we are, there are some things that can fill us even to the brim. But God is able to go beyond our absolute needs and He has often already done so. He has given to His redeemed more than, as creatures, they absolutely require making them happy and blessed. We might have been restored to the full stature of unfallen manhood and in consequence have been as Adam was before his sin, but wonder of wonders, the Lord has done more, for He has made us His children and His heirs, heirs of God, joint heirs of Jesus Christ. This is not the supply of necessity—it is the bestowal of honor, dignity, and exceedingly great glory. And now, although our needs are in themselves very terrible and far greater than can be supplied by anything short of all-sufficiency, yet God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we actually need. He will not treat us as men treat a pensioner, to whom they allot barely enough to live upon and count themselves generous for doing so. He will treat us as kings and princes and do exceeding abundantly above all that we need. Thus does He leave our prayers far behind, outstripping both our sense of need and the need itself.

Our prayer is also limited by our desire. Of course a man does not pray any further than his desires go—and our desires are not always as much awake as they should be. We are sometimes very cold and slow in desiring good things. The nether springs make us forget the upper fountains. Alas, like the foolish king of Israel, we shoot but two or three arrows when we ought to have emptied out our quiver. We bring but small cups to the well and take home but little water. Our mouths are not opened wide enough, for our hearts are not warm enough to melt the ice which closes our lips. But blessed be God, He is not limited by our desires. He is able to bless us beyond what our souls have yet learned to wish for.

And, alas, when we do desire great things, our faith is often weak and there we are restrained. We cannot believe God to be so good as to give us such unspeakable blessings and so we fail. How much we lose thereby I scarcely dare pause to consider. Our unbelief is a great impoverishment to us. Even when faith does become developed, and sometimes it does, yet I guarantee you its stature never reaches the height of the promise. No man ever believed God as much as he might believe, nor trusted His promise so implicitly as he might do, or put so large a construction upon the divine Word as it would bear. O brethren, we have to thank God that He is not bounded by our narrow faith, but even goes beyond what we believe concerning Him.

How often too we are limited in prayer by our lack of comprehension—we do not understand what God means. Search to see if there is a single promise in the whole covenant of grace which any child of God perfectly understands. There is a meaning in the covenant promises—a breadth, a length, a height, a depth not yet compassed. God condescends to use human language and to us the words mean silver, but He uses them in a golden sense. He never means less than He says, but He always means

far more than we think He says. For this let us magnify the Lord. His power to bless us is not bounded by our power to understand the blessing. Grace is not measured to us according to our capacity to receive, but according to His efficacy to bestow. He can enlarge us, my brethren. O that He would do so now! Prayer is an exercise in which our minds ought to be expanded and our hearts enlarged. Has not the Lord said, "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it"? Yet our widest mouth is not the measure of what He can give us. Our boldest prayer is not the boundary of what He is able to bestow. Pray at your utmost, like Elijah upon Carmel. Pray as you will till the keys of heaven seem to swing at your side and yet you can never outrun that omnipotence to bless which dwells in the Lord God Almighty.

The apostle then goes on to say that *the ability of God to bless is above what we think*. Now we can think of some things we dare not pray for. Thought is free and scarcely can space contain it. Its wings bear it far beyond all visible things. It can even soar into the impossible, yet thought cannot attain to the power of God to bless, for that is immeasurable. Have you not at times been filled with great thoughts of what God might do with you? Have you not imagined how He might use you for His glory? He can do more than you have dreamed! Turn your pleasant dreams into fervent prayers and it may yet please the Lord to make you useful to an amazing degree—so that you shall be astonished at what you will accomplish. If of a humble shepherd lad He made a David, He may do the same with you. Have you not, at other times, conceived great ideas of what the Lord will make out of you when you shall be washed, cleansed, delivered from sin, and carried away to serve Him in heaven? Ah, but you have no idea what you will be. You do not know, when you have guessed your greatest, how perfect and pure and blessed you will be in your Father's house on high when He has completed in you all the good pleasure of His will. You have sung sometimes—

"What must it be to dwell above!"

And your thoughts and imaginations have gone to very great lengths in picturing the repose, the security, the wealth, the enjoyment, the perfect satisfaction of heaven. Ah, yes, but the Lord is able to do more than has ever entered into your heart. There, fling the bridle on the neck of your imagination and let it, like a winged horse, not only scour the plains of earth, but fly through the clouds and mount above the stars—but its furthermost flight on the most rapid wings shall not bring you near the confines of the possibilities of God. Your thoughts, even at their best, are not His thoughts. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His thoughts above yours, think however you may. How amazing a subject is now before us! What language of mine can adequately set forth the divine ability to bless, when both the eagle eye of prayer and the eagle wing of thought fail to discover a boundary?

Now, I want to call your attention, in this passage, to every word of it, for every word is emphatic. "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above *all* that we ask or think." Not above some things that we ask, but, "all."

Not above some of our dimmer conceptions, our lower thoughts, but above "all" that we think. Now just put together all that you have ever asked for. Heap it up and then pile upon the top all that you have ever thought of concerning the riches of divine grace. What a mountain! Here we have hill on hill, Pelion on Ossa, as though Alp on Alp were heaped on end to build a staircase or a Jacob's ladder to the very stars. Go on! Go on! It is no Babel tower you build and yet its top will not reach unto heaven. High as this pyramid of prayers and contemplations may be piled, God's ability to bless is still higher—"above *all* that we ask or even think." Some render it, "Now unto Him that is able to do above all things exceeding abundantly," and so on. Well, take it so. God is able to bless us above all things; above all the blessings that others could give us—that is little; above all the blessedness which resides in creatures—that is great, but not comparable to what He can do; above all the blessings which can be imagined to be conveyed to us by all the creatures that are useful and beneficial to us—He is able to do above all good things for us. O Lord, help us to understand all this. Give us faith to get a grip of this and then to magnify and adore You. Alas, our adoration can never be proportionate to Your goodness!

Now, dwell on another word, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that *we* ask or think." The *we* refers to the apostles as well as to ourselves. Paul was a mighty man in prayer. What a wonderful prayer this chapter contains—how he finishes up, "That you might be filled with all the fullness of God." I will defy any man to bring out the meaning of those words to the fullest. Yet when he had prayed that prayer, Paul felt that God could go far beyond his comprehension of it. I do not know how, but he says so—above all that *we* ask—and of course this includes himself. Paul, in that *we* may be viewed as including the apostles—we, the 12 who have come nearest to Jesus and have been personally taught how to pray by Him—*we* who have seen Him face to face and upon whom His Spirit specially rests. "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what *we* ask!" The apostles were inspired. The Spirit of God was in them to an unusual degree, their thoughts were larger than ours, but says Paul, He is able to do above what *we* think, even *we,* His apostles, the best, the most holy, the most spiritual of Christian men! Oh, then, brethren, I am sure He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or think, for it is a terrible come down from the apostles' asking and thinking to ours. He must be able to do exceeding abundantly above the asking or thoughts of such poor, puny saints as we are.

Now, notice the apostle's use of the word, "*abundantly*." He says not only that God is able to do above what we ask or think, but "abundantly." We might say of a man, "He has given much, but he has still something left." That expression would fall sadly short if applied to the Most High. He has not only something left, but all abundance left. We have already understood but a part of His ways. We have been able to comprehend the mere remnant of His glorious grace. The reserve of goodness; the things which God has prepared for them that love Him, far exceed

our thoughts. Our apostle, not content with the use of the word "abundantly," adds another word, and says, "*exceeding abundantly*." He has constructed here in the Greek an expression which is altogether his own. No language was powerful enough for the apostle—I mean for the Holy Spirit speaking through the apostle—for very often Paul has to coin words and phrases to show forth his meaning and here is one—"He is able to do exceeding abundantly"—so abundantly that it exceeds measure and description. Yonder ship is on the sea and the sea can bear it up, though it weighs several thousand tons. Does that surprise you, my brethren? No, for you know that the ocean could float not merely one such ship, but a navy, yes, and more navies than you could count if you continued to number them throughout the lifelong day. The far-reaching main is able to bear upon its bosom, ships innumerable. It supports them "exceeding abundantly." God is as the great ocean. What you have seen Him do is but as it were the floating of one single boat. But what He can do, ah, that is "exceeding abundantly" above what you ask or think. There flows our beautiful river among the meadows and the child dips its cup to drink and is fully refreshed. Yet all that the child can take is as nothing compared with what still remains—and if along the banks of Father Thames, crowds of thirsty ones should congregate and drink their fill, both men and cattle—yet all they could abstract from the waters would bear a very inconsiderable proportion to the volume which would still flow to the sea. Lo, I see thousands of the redeemed crowding down to the all-sufficiency of God. I see them lie down to drink like men that must take draughts both long and deep or die. But after they have all drunk and all the creatures that live have all been supplied, I see no lessening in the blessedness which pours forth from the throne of God and of the Lamb, which can only be described in these words, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think."

Now to help you to adore the Lord—for that is my one objective this morning—think how blessed you are in having such an all-sufficient God. It is always pleasant to take out of a great heap and to know that what you receive does not deprive others of their share. Who cares to sit at a table where every morsel must be counted, for if you have more, somebody must have less? It is a scant feast where the provision is exactly measured. Here, at the table of our God, there is need of no such economy. "Eat, O friends, drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved," for the feast is of the King and His provisions are infinite.

Thus we see that there need be no limit to our prayers. You need never rise from your knees and say, "Perhaps I was presumptuous. Perhaps I have asked more than God will give?" Down on your knees, brother, sister, and ask God to forgive you for dishonoring Him by harboring such a thought. He is able to give exceeding abundantly above what you ask.

Thus we see also that He is still able to bless *us*, upon whom the ends of the earth are come, for if He was able to do exceeding abundantly in the apostle's time, He is quite as able still, and we may come to Him without fear. Now, I see also that if my case is very special, still I need

not tremble or stand in dread of need. What if I require superabundant grace? I may have it. If I need exceeding abundant help, I can have it. Ah, if I need more grace than I dare ask for, I can have it. Yes, and if I require more than I think, I may have it, for still my Lord is able to give it to me, and what He is able to do, He is willing to do.

What comfort this should afford even to poor sinners who are far away from God. He is able to give you great forgiveness for the greatest possible sin. Sins that you have not yet thought of, He can pardon. Do but come to God in Christ Jesus and you shall find Him able to save to the uttermost. If this little hint is taken up by some despairing heart, it may give it immediate peace. It cannot be true that God cannot forgive, for in Christ Jesus, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think."

II. Our second business is to answer the inquiry, IN WHAT WAY DO WE PERCEIVE THIS ABILITY? We cannot well praise what we cannot in any measure discern. The apostle says, "*according to the power that works in us*." We know that God can give us more than we ask or think, for *He has given us more than we have asked or thought*. Our regeneration came to us before prayer, for prayer was the first sign of the new birth already given. To pray for life is not a faculty of the dead—but regeneration puts into us the living desire and the spiritual longing. The first principle of life imparted makes us long after more life. We were dead in sin and far from God and He surprised us with His preventing mercy. And in us was fulfilled the words, "I was found of them that sought Me not." In this case, He did for us above what we asked or thought.

Redemption again—whoever sought for that? Had it not been provided from of old, who would have dared to ask the Lord to give His Son as a substitute to bleed and die for man? Sirs, in providing a substitute for us from before the foundation of the world, the Lord has already gone beyond man's thoughts or requests. Thanks be unto Him for His unspeakable gift. He gave us Christ and then gave us His blessed Spirit, another surprising boon which man could not have supposed possible for him to have obtained. Having done that which we never sought for, nor thought of, He is still able to amaze us with unlooked for grace.

Moreover, *where prayer has been offered, our heavenly Father has gone far beyond what we have asked or thought*. I said unto the Lord, in the anguish of my soul, that if He would forgive my sins I would be content to be the meanest servant in His house and would gladly lie in prison all my life, and live on bread and water. But His mercy did not come to me in that scanty way, for He put me among His children and gave me an inheritance. "Make me as one of Your hired servants" is a prayer the Father does not hear—He puts His hand on His child's mouth when he begins to talk so, and says, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet." We have asked for a stone and He has given us bread. We have asked for bare bread and he has given us angels' food. For brass, He has given silver and for silver, gold.

We looked for a drop and the rain has filled the pools. We sought a morsel and He has filled us with good things. And therefore we are warranted in expecting that in the future He will continue to outdo our prayers.

Look at the plan of salvation, in the next place, and you will see how *it suggests the ability of God to do more for us*. Who is He that chose us? Who is He that has begotten us again unto a lively hope? It is God the Father. And when you mention Him as having put His hand to the work of grace, you have opened a wide door of hope, for what is there He cannot do? He who has filled yon heavens with stars, scattering them broadcast as the sower sows corn, and could have made a thousand universes all full of worlds with as much ease as man speaks a word—has He begun to bless us and can there be any limit to His power to deal graciously with us? Impossible!

Look next at His dear Son. He that created the heavens and the earth is made a Man and lies in a manger. He whom angels obey is despised and rejected of men. He, who only has immortality, hangs on a tree and bleeds and dies. There must be, in those groans and those drops of sweat, and those wounds, and that death of His, a power to save altogether inconceivable. Immanuel made a sacrifice! What ability to bless must dwell in Him! He must be able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or think.

And who is this, the divine Spirit, who comes to dwell in us? Yes, literally to dwell in these mortal bodies and make these tabernacles of clay His temples! He has already mortified our lusts, already changed our hearts, and already made us partakers of the divine nature. My brethren, is there any limit to the possibilities of the Spirit's work in us? May we not fairly conclude that when God Himself comes to inhabit our bodies, He will deliver us from every sin and make us spotless as God is spotless—till in us shall be fulfilled the command—"Be you holy, for I am holy"?

Look at the plan—it is drawn to a wondrous scale. The Trinity in Unity is manifest in the divine working within us and there must be something inconceivably great possible to us through the working of such mighty power. Come then, dear friend, and for a moment think of the power which actually dwells in you; if you are a Christian, you must be conscious of a power in you far too great for your mental or physical constitution to bear if it were not restrained. Do you never experience groans which cannot be uttered, deep and terrible, like the moving of an earthquake, as though everything were loosed within you with extreme heaviness, anguish, and travailing in birth? These pangs and throes betray the latent God within you, cramped for room within the narrow bounds of your new created and growing spiritual nature. Have you never felt the working and striving of strong desires, fierce hunger, and insatiable thirsts? Have you not felt mysterious energies working like pent-up springs within your spirit, demanding space and vent, or threatening to burst your heart? Are you never conscious of the infinite struggling within you? Have you never felt like a little bird shut up within its egg, chip-

ping at the shell to gain liberty? Are you not conscious that you are not what you shall be? Do you not feel omnipotence rush through you sometimes with unutterable joy, till you have to cry, "Hold, my Lord, this joy becomes not man—it is the joy of Christ fulfilled in me and if I feel it any longer I must die, for in this body it is insupportable"? There are ecstasies, but we must not tell of them here. There are high mysterious delights of which it is scarcely lawful to speak, upliftings wherein man so communes with his Maker as to rise above himself and to be far more than man—even as the bush in Horeb, though but a bush, was rendered capable of burning with fire without being consumed—and so was more than a bush, for it blazed with Deity. Are not your hearts familiar with these sacred mysteries of the heaven-born life? If they are, then you have the means of guessing at the apostle's meaning when he said, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think, according to the power that works in us." God grant us to know this more fully.

III. Our third consideration is—WHAT, THEN, SHALL BE RENDERED TO GOD? "*Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.*" "Unto Him be glory." Oh, my soul, adore Him! Feel His splendor, let His exceeding goodness shine full upon your soul and warm you with its rays and let the warmth be adoring love! Oh, my soul, tell out His goodness and reflect the light which falls upon you from Himself—and so glorify Him by manifesting to the sons of men what He manifests to you! Yes, my soul, let all that is within you bathe in His boundless goodness and then glorify Him by perpetual service. Bow your strength to obedience. Be yoked to that mighty chariot in which Jesus rides forth conquering and to conquer, saving the sons of Adam. God deserves glory in the most emphatic sense and in the most practical meaning of that term. Oh, my brethren and sisters let us try to render it to Him.

But the apostle felt that he must not say, "Unto Him be glory in my soul." He wished that, but his one soul afforded far too little space and so he cried, "Unto Him be glory *in the church.*" He calls upon all the people of God to praise the divine name. If all the world beside were dumb, the church must always proclaim the glory of God. If moon and stars and sun and sea no more reflect the majesty of the Creator, yet let the redeemed of the Lord praise Him, even those whom He has redeemed out of the hand of the enemy. As Israel sung at the Red Sea with dances and timbrel, so let the church of God exult, for He has brought us through the sea and drowned our adversaries—"The depths have covered them, there is not one of them left." You, O Jesus, have redeemed our souls with blood, have set the prisoners free, and made us to be a royal priesthood and therefore Your church must praise You without ceasing.

But as if he felt that the church herself was unequal to the task, though she is ordained to be the sphere of the divine glory, note how he puts it, "in the church *by Christ Jesus.*" You, Lord Jesus, You are He alone among men eloquent enough to express the glory of God. Grace is poured into Your lips and You can declare our praises for us. Brethren,

do you not remember how our blessed Lord vowed to praise the divine name among His brethren? Read the 22nd Psalm, and you will see how He becomes the chief musician, the leader of the choirs of the blessed. By Christ it is that our praises ascend to heaven. He is the spokesman for us, the interpreter, one of a thousand before the throne of the infinite Majesty. O Christ—we are Your body, and every member of the body praises God. But You are the Head and You must speak for us with those dear lips that are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh. You must offer our praises to the great High Priest and they shall be accepted at Your hands.

Yet the apostle was not satisfied, for he adds, "Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus *through all ages.*" And the Greek runs exactly thus, "unto all the generations of the age of ages." Perhaps the apostle half expected the world to last for ages, although he did not know when Christ might come and therefore stood watching for Him. At any rate, he desired that generation after generation might show forth the glory of God and when there were no more succeeding races of men, he desired that that age of ages, the golden age, God's age, the age of peace and joy and blessedness, whatever phases it might pass through, might never cease to resound with the glory of God. Oh, blessed words of the apostle! We cannot reach their meaning and if we did, still that meaning would be short of what God deserves—

"I'll praise Him while He lends me breath;
And when my voice is lost in death!
Praise shall employ my nobler powers
My days of praise shall be never past,
While thought and life and being last,
Or immortality endures."

Our children shall follow after us and they shall praise the Lord. And their children and they shall praise Him and their children and they shall praise Him. And when the time comes that the earth grows old and Christ Himself shall descend from heaven to renew all things, His saints shall magnify Him when He comes. When He smites His foes and breaks them in pieces like potter's vessels, the saints shall still adore Him. And when comes the end and He shall have delivered up the power to God, even the Father, still the everlasting song shall go up to God and the Lamb. And through the ages of ages when God shall be all in all, it shall be the bliss of every redeemed one forever and forever to say, "Unto Him be glory, unto Him be glory forever and ever."

IV. I have done when you have done—and the last point concerns what you have to do. WHAT SHALL WE SAY TO ALL THIS?

The text tells us in one word. It concludes with your part of it—"Amen." Some of you have newly been born to God. You are babes in His family. I pray you to glorify Him this morning, who can do for you exceeding abundantly above what you ask or think. Say, "Amen," while we unite in ascribing glory to Him. And you, my brethren, who, like myself are in the vigor of manhood, in the very prime of life, working for God, let us heartily say, "Amen," as well we may, for all the grace we have had

and still have comes from Him. And you, my venerable brethren who are getting near to heaven, there is more mellowness in your voices than in ours, for there is a ripeness and maturity in your experience, therefore say you first and foremost, "Unto Him be glory in the church." Say it now, all classes of believers—you who are rejoicing in the Lord this morning, and you also who are sorrowful and sad, say, "Amen;" though you have not the present joy, yet say, "Amen," in the expectation of it. Be not laggard any one of you to say, "Unto Him be glory in the church throughout all ages. Amen." Say it, O church below, without exception. Say it, all you militant ones. You saints that lie upon your sick beds and you that are near to death, yet say, "Amen"; you that suffer and you that labor, you who sow and you who reap, say, "Amen"; and when the whole church below has said, "Amen," O church above, take up the grand, "Amen!" You triumphant ones who have washed your robes in the blood of the Lamb, I need not challenge you to say, "Amen," for I know you do it louder and more sweetly than saints below.

You sinners, who have not yet tasted of His grace, I think I might almost urge you to say, "Amen," for if you have not yet obtained mercy, He is able to give it to you. You have come here, this morning, thirsty like Hagar and God sees you. You are searching for a little water to fill your bottle. See, yonder is a well, a well which flows freely. Drink of it, drink and live, and say, "Amen," as you bless the Lord who looks on you in love. Perhaps you came here like Saul, seeking your father's donkeys, or some such trifles. Behold, He gives you a kingdom—He gives you more than you ask or think—freely He gives it according to the riches of His grace. Accept it, and then say, "Amen." Oh, with one heart and one soul let all of you that have been redeemed from death and hell, or even hope to be so, join in this ascription—

"Now to the Lord, whose power can do
More than our thoughts or wishes know,
Be everlasting honor done,
By all the church, through Christ His Son."

Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ephesians 3.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—166, 450, 412.

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THE GOD OF BETHEL
NO. 1267

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

"I am the God of Bethel."
Genesis 31:13.

JACOB had been sent away to Padan-aram and he might, perhaps, have stopped there if things had been quite as he wished. As it was, he stayed there quite long enough. He seemed almost to forget his father's house in the cares that his wives and children and the anxious oversight of his constantly increasing flocks involved. But God did not mean him to remain at Padan-aram. He was to lead a separated life in Canaan and therefore things grew very uncomfortable with Laban. He was not a nice man to live with at any time, but he began to show his crotchets and his heart-burnings, and a good deal of that scheming spirit of which there was a little in Jacob. It came to him from his mother, who was Laban's true sister, and had her share of the family failing. So there were endless bickerings, bargainings, and disputes, and overreachings the one of the other—till at last, as God would have it, Jacob could bear it no longer. So he resolved to take leave of that land and return to the land of his kindred. An angel appeared to him then to comfort him in going back to his father's house. The angel spoke in the name of the Lord and said, "I am the God of Bethel," which must have at once suggested to Jacob *that the Lord had not changed*, more especially in regard to him. The occurrence at Bethel was the first special occasion probably upon which he had known the Lord and though many years had passed, God comes to him as the same God as He was before. "I am the God of Bethel." You remember, some of you, perhaps the first time when pardoning love was revealed to you—when you were brought to see the love of God in the great atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Well, tonight, the Lord says to you, "I am the same God as you have ever found Me. I have not changed. I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed, even as your father Jacob was not consumed, for I was even to him the same God. Brethren, what a mercy it is that we have an immutable God. Everything else changes. Yon moon, which but a little while ago was full, you see now young and new again and soon she will fill her horns. Everything beneath her beams changes like herself. We are never at one stage and our circumstances are perpetually varying. But You, O God, are the same and of Your years there is no end. Your creatures are a sea, but You are the *terra firma* and when our soul comes to rest on You, Rock of Ages, then we know what stability means and for the first time we enjoy true rest. Trust in the Lord forever and rest in the Lord alone, for He changes not.

"I AM THE GOD OF BETHEL. Does not that mean, first, *that our God is the God of our early mercies*? As we have already said, Bethel was to

Jacob the place of early mercy. Let us look back upon our early mercies. Did they not come to us, as they did to him, unsought and unexpected and when, perhaps, we were unprepared for them? I do not know what were Jacob's feelings when he lay down with a stone for his pillow, but I feel very sure that he never reckoned that the place would be the house of God to him. His exclamation showed this when he said, "Surely, God is in this place, and I knew it not!" It was the last thing on his mind that, amidst those stones, the Lord would set up a ladder for him and would speak from the top of it to his soul. So, dear friends, with some of us, when God appeared to us, it was in a very unexpected manner. Perhaps we were not looking for Him, but in us was fulfilled that memorable word, "I am found of them that sought Me not." We, like Jacob, were glad to meet Him, but we had not expected that He would come, or come in so divine a manner, with such fullness of covenant manifestation and such richness of grace. But He took our soul before we were aware and carried us right away from ourselves. We, perhaps, like Jacob, were sleeping. God was awake. This was the mercy. And He came to us while yet our heart slept and our mind had not felt awakened towards Himself. We seemed slumbering with regard to divine things, but as a dream in the visions of the night, so God came to us. He found us sleeping, but nevertheless He manifested Himself to us as He does not unto the world. Do you remember all that? Then the God you have to look to is the God of that unexpected grace. Do you need grace tonight? Why should you not have it? Are you unfit for it? Do you feel more and more how undeserving you are of it? Yet it came to you before, when you were in just such a state. Why shouldn't it come again? Sitting in this house of prayer, why should not we again be startled and be made to say, "Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not. I did not think, when I came within these walls that here He would, in such a special manner, reveal Himself to me. But now I shall always think of the seat in which I sat, and say, 'How dreadful is this place! It is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven.'" The God of unexpected manifestations in your early days is still the same God.

Perhaps, dear friends, some of you can look back upon those early manifestations as having taken place when you were in a very sad and lonely condition. Jacob was alone. He was a man that loved society. There are many signs of that. Perhaps, for the first time in his life, he was then out of the shelter of his tent and away from the familiar voices of his beloved father and mother. He had always been his mother's son. Something about him had always attracted her. But now, no one was within call. He might, perhaps, have heard the roar of the wild beast, but no familiar voice of a friend was anywhere near. It was a very lonely night to him. Some of us remember the first night we were away from home—how dreary we felt as children. The same kind of homesickness will come over men and women and they say to themselves, "Now, at last, I have got out of the range in which I have been accustomed to go, and I have got away from the dear familiar faces that made life so happy to me." Yes, but it was just then that God appeared to him and have not you found it so? Amid darkest shades, Christ appears to you. Have not you had times

of real desolation of spirit from one cause or another in which the Lord has seemed more sweet to you than ever He was before? When all created streams have run dry, the everlasting fount has bubbled up with more sweet and cooling streams than it ever did at any other time. Well, recollect all those scenes and the accompanying circumstances which made them seem so cheering, and then say, "This God, even the God of Bethel, is still my God. And if I am at present in trouble, if I am as lonely now as I was then, if I am brought so low that literally I have nothing but a doorstep for my pillow, if I should lose job, home, and friends, and be left like an orphan among the wild winds, with none to shelter me, yet O God of Bethel, You who were the cover of my head and the protector of my spirit, will still be with me, the God of those early visitations in times of my dark distress." Thus the God of Bethel by that visit cheered Jacob's heart. I can hardly suppose that there was an individual more unhappily circumstanced that night than Jacob was. But I question whether ever any individual in tent or palace woke up so happy in the morning as the patriarch did. Oh, it was a night that might make us wish to lie beneath the same dews and look up to the same heaven, if we might see the same vision. We would put from us the downy pillow, the luxurious curtains, and the comfortable well-furnished chambers and say, "Give us, oh, give us, Lord, if so it might please You, that same desert place, if we might but see You and hear Your voice, as Jacob did of old." Oh, how strong he was to pursue his journey after he poured that oil on the top of the stone. I guarantee you he went many an extra mile that day in the strength of that night's sleep. Now he could refrain from pining after his kindred and his father's house. Now he could keep his face constantly towards Bethuel's home, where his father had sent him, for the God of his fathers had said, "I am with you in all places where you go, and I will bring you back again unto this place." Now, do you not remember how you were strengthened and comforted in like manner? Have not you sung—

"Midst darkest shades, if He appears,
My dawning is begun.
He is my soul's bright morning star,
And He my rising sun."

Have not you found Him all that you needed and more than you expected? Has not grace for grace been given and strength equal to your day because the Lord appeared of old unto you? Brethren, the presence of God puts the iron shoes on the feet of the weary traveler—no, it makes his feet like hinds' feet, so that he stands on high places. And while he pours out the oil of gratitude, God pours upon him the oil of joy and puts away his mourning. So the pilgrim foots it merrily over the rough way until he gets to the place where he is told to go. The God of Bethel, then, is the God of early visits unexpected, given when much needed and yielding just what was needed of peace to the soul.

"I AM THE GOD OF BETHEL." This title conveys a fresh lesson. Does it not mean, the *God of our Lord Jesus Christ?* What is "Beth-el" but "the house of God"? Brethren, I hear that term constantly applied to your buildings that are made with stone or iron, with brick and mortar, or with lath and plaster or whatever it may be. Every little conventicle that

is put up and every huge cathedral that is built, be it a building with lowly porch or lofty spire, is called the house of God. Well, did you never read where it is said, "God that made heaven and earth dwells not in temples made with hands, that is to say, of this building"? Have you never read that magnificent sentence of Solomon at the consecration of the temple, "Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house which I have built"? Do you think, then, that He will dwell in any of these classic buildings, be they of Greek, or Gothic, or Norman, or mediaeval architecture? Oh, sirs, God is great and greatly to be praised as much outside as inside of your petty structures. He is everywhere. He fills all things. And God's house is not a place that you can build for Him, artistic as your tastes may be. Your memorial windows are not His remembrancers. They may charm you, they cannot please Him. But there is a place where God always dwells. What habitation has He prepared for Himself and what tabernacle has He built? There is one abode mysteriously fashioned. We speak of its strange conception and its matchless purity of architecture. It was the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. "A body have you prepared Me." And the house of God, the true Bethel, is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, for, "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." For, "The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The house of God is first, the person of Christ, and then the church of God, which is the body of Christ mystically. This is the house and the household of God, even the church of the living God.

Not now to insist upon that meaning of the word Bethel, or on Him who came to Bethlehem, and there was born the very house of the divine indwelling, I will rather muse upon that vision which made God, especially to Jacob that night, the God of the Savior. He saw the ladder, the foot of which was on earth and the top reached to heaven—a ladder which can never be explained in any other way than as a figure of that same Christ who came down from heaven, who also is in heaven, by whom we must ascend to heaven and through whom heaven's blessings come down to us.

The God of Bethel is a God who concerns Himself with the things of earth, not a God who shuts Himself up in heaven. The God of Bethel is a God who has a ladder fixed between heaven and earth. The God of most men—the God of the unregenerate—is an inanimate God, or if alive and able to see, he is an unfeeling God, careless about them and their personal interests. "Oh, it is preposterous," they say, "to think that he takes notice of our sorrows and troubles—and still more absurd to suppose that he hears prayer, or that he ever interferes in answer to the voice of supplication, to grant a poor man his requests. It cannot be." That is their God, you see. That is the God of the heathen—a dead, blind, dumb God. I do not wonder that they do not pray to him. They could not expect an answer. But the God of grace is one who has opened a communication between heaven and earth. He notices the cries of His children, puts their tears into His bottle, sympathizes with their sorrows, looks down on them with an eye of pity and a father's love. He has communion with

them and permits them to have communion with Him, and all that through the blessed person of the Lord Jesus Christ. See where the foot of this ladder rests on earth, for He lies in the manger at Bethlehem as a babe. He lives on earth the life of a common laborer, wearing the smock frock of toil. He dies upon the accursed tree a felon's death that He may be like man even in bearing the image of death upon His face. This is where the ladder stands, in the miry clay of manhood. But see where it rises, for He is equal with God, co-equal, equal in power, wisdom, dignity, and holiness, and every glorious attribute, very God of very God, before whom angels bow. The bottom of the ladder comes down to man, but the top of it reaches right up to God, in all the glory of the mysterious Godhead. Thus, you see there is a link between the two. And the God whom we worship does hold fellowship with us and remains no silent spectator of our griefs. Up that ladder angels ascend and our prayers ascend—our praises, our tears, our sighs. Jesus teaches them the way. And there is a traffic downwards too, for blessings come both rich and rare by the way of the Mediator. We shall never be able to count them. How great is the sum of them! What traffic there is on the rungs of that ladder! Upwards, O my soul, send your messengers a thousand times a day. But downwards God's messengers are continually coming—mercies, favors, altogether as innumerable as the sands that are upon the seashore, and all coming down that ladder. There is a way of judgement which the swift-winged angel takes without a ladder, but the way of mercy always needs that staircase of light. No mercy or favor comes to us except through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom we deal with God and God deals with us.

That way in Jacob's dream, you will notice, was eminently a way commended to him, for the foot of the ladder was where Jacob lay and the top of it was where God was. Have we realized this? Do you know God, my brethren, as One with whom *you* can speak—with whom *you* can speak yourself—as real to you as your husband, your father, your friend? Are you in the habit of keeping up constant communication with your God? If you are, you know the God of Bethel. If you are not, I pray that the God of Bethel may reveal Himself to you. You could not have had fellowship with God if there had been no Christ. Without the ladder, how could there be a connection between Jacob and God? But with the ladder, even Jesus Christ, the way is open, open always, open now. Oh, it has been open many and many a time. We have resorted to it and never found it closed. We have cried to Him in deep distress, but the way upwards has been open when all surrounding ways were shut. We have needed mercy and mercy has come when we thought that mercy could not possibly reach us. Yet it came downwards when it could not have come in any other way. And it is just the same tonight. Oh, use the ladder. Use it well. Dart your desires upwards now. They shall tread those rungs. Your thanks, your petitions, your confessions—send them up. They are welcome. The ladder is made on purpose for the traffic. Use it now, and as you use it, bless the God of Bethel with all your heart.

Still further, let us remember that this God of Bethel is *the God of angels*. We do not often say much about those mysterious beings, for it is

but little that we know of them. This, however, we know—that angels are set by God to be the *watchers* over His people. Jacob was asleep, but the angels were wide awake. They were going up and down that ladder while Jacob was lying there, steeped in slumber. So when you and I are sleeping, when the blessed God has put His finger on our eyelids and said, "Lie still, My child, and be refreshed," there may be no policeman at the door, no bodyguard to prevent intrusion, but there are angels always watching over us. We shall not come to harm if we put our trust in God. "I will lay me down to sleep, for You make me to dwell in safety." These angels were also *messengers*. "Are they not all ministering spirits?" And are they not sent with messages from God? To Jacob they had their errand. On more than one occasion, angels bore him messages from the Most High. How far or how often they bring us messages now I cannot tell. Sometimes thoughts drop into the soul that do not reach us in the regular connection of our thoughts. We scarcely know how to account for them. It may be they are due to the immediate action of the blessed Spirit, but they may, for all we know, be brought by some other spirit, pure and heavenly, sent to suggest those thoughts to our soul. We cannot tell. The angels are watchers, certainly, and they are messengers without a doubt. Moreover, they are our *protectors*. God employs them to bear us up in their hands, lest at any time we dash our foot against a stone. We do not see them, but unseen agencies are probably the strongest agencies in the world. We know it is so in physics. Such agencies as electricity, which we cannot perceive, are, nevertheless, unquestionably powerful and when put forth in their strength, quite beyond the control of man. No doubt myriads of spiritual creatures walk this earth, both when we sleep and when we wake. How much of good they do us, it is impossible for us to tell. But this we do know—they are "sent forth to minister to them that are heirs of salvation," and they are, in God's hands, the means oftentimes of warding off from us a thousand ills which we know not of. Therefore we cannot thank God that we are kept from them, except we do so by thanking Him, as I think we ought to do more often, for those unknown mercies which are none the less precious because we have not the sense to be able to perceive them. Perhaps in mid-air at this moment, there may be battles between the bright spirits of God and the spirits of evil. Perhaps full often when Satan might tempt, there come against him a mighty squadron of cherubim and seraphim to drive him back. And those strange battles of which Milton sings in his wondrous epic may not be all a dream. We cannot tell. We know they dispute—the good angels dispute with the wicked and contend. We know that they are mighty in battle and strong on behalf of God's people. Anyhow, this is true—Omnipotence has many servants and some of those least seen are the strongest it employs. If there is an angel anywhere, my friend, he is your friend if you are God's friend. If there is in heaven or earth any bright intelligence flying swiftly at this moment, he flies upon no errand of harm to you. You can be sure of that. Occasionally I meet with very foolish people who believe in things which are unrevealed, in things superstitious and baseless fancies. Oftentimes they are not a little frightened about I scarcely know what—about enchantments, divinations, or sorcer-

ies. There is such a credulity that still survives among the extremely ignorant. But whenever I have heard such observations, I have always thought of that wonderful text in the Book of Numbers, "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." There can be no spiritual powers which you or I have any need to fear. I remember hearing a good brother speak about courage against the devil, and in reference to spiritual power he said that he believed that a man of God when he had faith could kick his way through a street full of devils from one end to the other. I admired his simile. It was worthy of Martin Luther, for it was the kind of thing that Martin Luther would have said. Oh, if the air were as full of devils as it is of fogs, a man that has God within him might laugh them all to scorn. Who can hurt the man whom God protects? Unseen powers and terrible they may be, but they cannot injure us, for there are other unseen powers more terrible still—the hosts of that Lord who is mighty in battle—and all these are sworn to protect the children of God. "You have given commandment to save me," says David, and if God has charged His angels to protect and save His people from all harm, depend upon it, His people are secure.

Moreover, *the God of Bethel is the God of Providence*. That He is the God of Providence and that He revealed Himself as such, is very clear, for He told Jacob, "Behold I am with you, and will keep you in all places where you go, and will bring you again to this land, for I will not leave you till I have done that which I have spoken to you." So He gave Jacob a promise that he should have bread to eat and raiment to put on—and should come again to that place in peace. Christian, your God is the God of Providence. He is the God of Bethel. Doddridge's hymn, which we sang just now, thus celebrates His praise—

"O God of Bethel, by whose hand
Your people still are fed;
Who through this weary pilgrimage
Have all our fathers led."

Let us think of it, brethren—God is with His people in all places wherever they go. On the land or on the sea, by day or by night, you never can be where God is not. It is impossible for you to journey out of your Father's dominions. You may live in a mansion or a hovel and yet still be in His house, for His house is of vast dimensions. "In My Father's house are many mansions." You may dwell here or there and still be in the great house of the heavenly Father.

And He is with you to provide you with all necessary things. Has not it been so until now? You may have had some very hard pinches. Perhaps you have partaken the bitter fare of widowhood. Your children may have cried about your knee for daily bread. Perhaps you have been very poor and the supply you have received has been scant. Still you are alive. Your food has been given you and your waters have been sure. Your garments are worn, but not quite worn out. Your shoes about you scarcely defend you from the damp, but still you are not altogether unshod. Until this time the Lord has helped you. Jehovah-Jireh has been your song. The Lord has provided. He whom Jacob worshipped as the God of Bethel has been the God of Bethel till now. Can you not trust Him? The little birds in the winter morning sit on the bare branches and

sing when the snow covers all the ground—and they cannot tell where their breakfast will come from. They do the first duty—they sing—and they sing before they have had their breakfast. And God somehow provides for them. Seldom do you pick up a dead sparrow. For the most part, the birds of heaven are fed. Perhaps you would like to live in a cage and be fed regularly and have a pension. I believe that more of those birds die that are taken care of as pets by men and women than of those that are taken care of by God. So it is better for you to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. He has not let you starve, nor will He, even to your journey's end. Take this from His own mouth. "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and *verily* you shall be fed." There is God's "*verily*" for it. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but that "verily" shall never fail.

He promised Jacob, too, that he should have a seed and posterity. It did not look like it as Jacob lay there, but yet He proved its verity before Jacob came back. Why, when he returned he had some 12 children about him. There was a God of Bethel! He had, indeed, granted him the desire of his heart. As the good man said a little while after, "With my staff I crossed this Jordan and now have I become two bands." Ah, Jacob! He promised to provide for you. Look at the troop of children. "Yes," but Jacob might have said, "That is part of the burden." No, then, but listen to the bleating of those sheep. Listen to the lowing of the cattle. What do they mean, Jacob? "That is the provision that God has given me in the land of exile." Ah, and you have, most of you, got far more than you ever reckoned upon. You have, some of you, to thank God, indeed, for what He has done for you in providential things, and even those that have least have got more than they deserve. Let them remember that and however poor we may be, we shall never be as poor as we were when we were born. We brought nothing into this world. Come as low as we may, we shall have enough to float us into heaven, depend upon that—just enough manna to last until we get across Jordan and then we shall eat of the old corn of the land that flows with milk and honey.

But God had also promised Jacob that he would bring him back to that place again. And that was another engagement of providence—that he was to go there and be brought back again—and by this should it be known that He was the God of Bethel. Now this really looked, at one time, very unlikely. Seven years he had to serve for Rachel and then got Leah instead, so there were seven more years to serve for Rachel. Then there came one year during which he had to be after the spotted sheep, and then another after the ring-streaked, and so on. So it did not look as if he should ever get away from Mesopotamia at all. But God had said that He would bring him back there in peace. Would He do it? Yes, He would drive him out of Laban's house somehow, for return to his fatherland he must. Yet as soon as he gets out of Laban's house, Laban is after him in hot haste. I do not know what Laban was not going to do—something very horrible, indeed—slay the father and mother with the children? But by the time that he gets close up to Jacob he cannot help himself, his heart is changed. He wants to kiss his daughters and his grandchildren and he has not got any thought of anger in him. God had

warned him in a dream not to speak to Jacob either good or bad. So Laban tells Jacob that he is very sorry that he did not know that he was going, for he would have sent him out with mirth and with songs, with music and with harp. Though the truth is, he would not have let him go at all. But God knew how to manage Laban, though Jacob did not. And when Jacob left Laban's land, Jacob had dwelt there long enough and he was never to pass into it again, for they had left a heap of stones and that reminded them that neither of them was to go over those stones to hurt one another. And they said, "The Lord watch between us when we are absent from one another." And they did not interfere with one another any more.

There are many things in providence that God will bring to pass in a very mysterious way. He uses trial and trouble full often to compass His wise designs. It is not the winds that blow directly towards the harbor that are always the best for ships. They speed better with cross winds sometimes, as you might think them not altogether favorable, as some would imagine, because they have a little touch of another quarter in them. And so it appears to me that the best wind to take a man to heaven is not the wind that blows due heavenward all the time, as he fondly wishes, but a cross wind that gives you a little chop of sea now and then and makes you feel the stress of anxiety and adversity. The thing a man wishes for his own welfare is not always the most desirable. Full often the deluge we dreaded has brought us a blessing we had not expected. Some sad reverse has issued in a glad result. We had better leave it with God to order all our affairs. Brethren, God manages providence. You may rest assured of that. He stands in the chariot and holds the reins. Though the steeds are furious, He holds them in with bit and bridle. Nothing happens but what God ordains or permits. Nothing, however terrible it may seem, can thwart His everlasting purposes of mercy, or turn aside one of His dear children from the eternal inheritance to which He has appointed them all. Rest in the Lord, for the Lord lives, and the Lord reigns. Stay yourselves upon Him. Nothing can hurt you. Make Him your refuge and you shall find a most secure abode and rejoice in the God of Bethel, who is God of providence.

Next to this, the God of Bethel is *the God of the promises*. What a many promises He made that night to Jacob! Yet He kept them all. So the God of Bethel is to you and to me the God of promises.

The everlasting covenant was confirmed to Jacob—"I am the Lord God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac." That meant that He was the God of the covenant. And the God with whom you and I have to deal is a God who may do as He wills. He is an absolute sovereign, but He never can do anything but what is right. Nevertheless, He has bound Himself—to speak with reverence—with bonds and pledges to us in the person of Jesus Christ, saying, "Surely, blessing, I will bless you." There is a covenant entered into on our behalf by the Lord Jesus with the Father. It brings to us unnumbered blessings, assuredly and certainly, for God cannot lie and He has given us two immutable pledges that we may have strong consolation and never doubt His faithfulness. Beloved, the God of the promises has appointed your lot and heritage and you shall

stand in it at the end of the days. The God of the promises has appeared to you in Jesus Christ and to you also has He sworn an oath, therefore you also may rest in the blood of Jesus, which makes the covenant sure. He has promised never to leave His people. "I will not leave you," He says to Jacob—and He says the same to you. He has promised that He will never forget to give what He has declared He will give. "I will not leave you till I have done that which I have spoken of to you." Oh, blessed Word! I feel as if my mouth were closed, and words failed me. The divine utterance itself is so rich, so full of marrow and fatness, that to talk about it seems like gilding gold, or adding whiteness to the lily's beauty. Only take it home. May the Spirit of God apply it. The God that changes not has made all the promises, yes and amen, in Christ Jesus to the glory of God by us, and every one of His promises made to believers shall stand fast and firm, though earth's old columns bow—"Though heaven and earth shall pass away, neither jot nor tittle of His Word shall fail."

But time fails me. I must leave this inspiriting meditation just to notice, once more, that the God of Bethel is *the God of our vows*. Do not forget this, for it is the practical part—the God of Bethel is the God of our vows. You remember, brethren, Jacob vowed that God should be his God. You remember when you made a similar vow?—

"Oh, happy day that fixed my choice
On You, my Savior and my God.
Well may this glowing heart rejoice
And tell its rapture all abroad.
High heaven that heard that solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

God who gave Himself to us has led us to give ourselves to Him. Now we are not our own, for we are bought with a price; looking up from the inmost recesses of our sincere hearts we can say, "My God, my Father, You are mine forever and forever." And then Jacob, having made that vow, said—"This stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be God's house." In the fresh gratitude of his heart, he made a solemn dedication to the Lord. And have you not said something like it? Did you not give your house to God when you gave yourself to Him? Have you not given God not only one place to be a Bethel, but have not you asked Him to make your whole life and every place where you are a Bethel to His name? So it should be, and I trust so it is, for this is true Christianity—not to account this place or that edifice holy, but to make every place, be it your kitchen or your parlor, your bedchamber or your workshop, holy—and the pots and the pans, the implements of your daily calling all holy before the Lord. Is that your vow? Let it be your daily desire that that vow should be fulfilled—be resolved to live for God, for God ready to die, if need be—never doing anything but what you can ask His blessing. And whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. And doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus, give thanks to God and the Father by Him. This should be true.

The other thing that Jacob promised was that he would give a tenth unto the Lord. I do not know whether any of you have made any vow of

that kind. I suppose there are few Christians who have not, at some time or other, made a vow of this sort. Well, brethren and sisters, perform your vows unto the Lord. God forbid that we should ever say anything in the heat of emotion, or make any pledge without due premeditation, for God is not to be mocked. When we have once devoted anything unto the Lord, let us not draw back our hand. I have known Christian men who have said, "If the Lord should prosper me till I am worth such-and-such an amount, all that I gain beyond it shall be given as a free-will offering to Him." I know one or two of the largest givers in Christendom who are thus fulfilling the vows they made. Yet I have also known some persons entangled by their vows. They have had in perplexity to ask, "What am I to do? I am in such a position that a larger capital than I ever contemplated is necessary for the carrying on of my business. Yet I have pledged myself to give and call my own no more than a definite sum which I have already in possession." You must take heed how you vow, for you may entangle yourself. Very often it is best not to vow at all. But if in the hour of sorrow you have opened your mouth unto the Lord, take heed that you do not withdraw from the thing your heart has purposed and your lips have uttered. Sometimes the Lord directs His people to make some solemn pledge which, otherwise, they might not have done. He does this on purpose, that they may do more for the glory and honor of His name than they have ever done before. I remember one night, when I was about to preach, my subject went from me—my text and every thought about it were gone. It was in a village chapel and I sat there, I know not in what state of trepidation. I breathed my soul to God and there came before me, as in a moment, the face of a certain worthy brother—a poor man, exceedingly poor—who wanted me to assist him in his education at the College [Pastors College], but I had not the means just then. I did not know how to do it. I breathed a prayer to God that He would help me, and I promised that that brother should be taken. He was one of my earliest students and he has been honored of God and blessed in the conversion of souls for the past 16 or 17 years. I do not think that I should ever have taken him if it had not been for that dilemma of mine. And when I had vowed the vow unto the Lord that I would find the money for him, even if I went without myself, my sermon came back to me and I preached with pleasure—and I hope with profit. I was glad of my vow and I was able to keep it. Sometimes such things are right. At other times, it would be absurd to think of making such a vow. Better to feel that everything belongs to God already, and therefore you have nothing to spare to vow with, because you have already consecrated everything that you had from first to last to His glory. Yet if you ever do set up an Ebenezer in your pilgrimage, be sure to pour some oil out of your cruse at the time to hallow it, as Jacob did. Then the vows you have ratified will be sweet to look back upon. The God of Bethel, who remembers the vow that you vowed unto Him, will be the more precious unto your soul. I should not wonder if that woman who poured the alabaster box of ointment on Christ's head often thought about what a blessed thing it was that she did. I am sure that there was not one time in all her life that she ever said, "Oh, how handy the money of that alabaster box would come in

now. I wish I had not spent it." No, she would think it over oftentimes. Perhaps she became a poor woman afterwards. At any rate, Christ was gone and she would say, "Oh, how glad I am that when the opportunity offered, I seized it." Though Judas said, "To what purpose is this waste?" she did not care much about Judas. She would say, "I anointed my blessed Master and filled the house with the sweet perfume, and I am glad I did it, and I shall be glad even when I see His face in heaven." So may you often feel; take no credit to yourself for anything you do. That we could never tolerate. Yet be thankful if the Lord leads you in His providence, and enables you by His grace to do something special for Him. It will make you think with all the more sweetness of the God of Bethel as you read of the way in which God accepts your votive offering, for my text runs like this—"I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar, and where you vowed a vow unto Me." So the vow is part and parcel of the title which God loves to remember, and He would have us lovingly remember too.

Dear friends, I am afraid there are some among you who do not know the God of Bethel. Let me tell you that He is the God you need—the God of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the only ladder for your poor souls to get to heaven by. This is a ladder with easy rungs. It is a ladder strong enough to bear the biggest sinner that ever tried his weight on it. And if you will but come and trust Jesus, you shall go up that ladder, even to the place where Jehovah dwells in all His purity and you shall be with Him forever and ever.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis 28.
HYMN FROM OUR "OWN HYMN BOOK"—214, 125.

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THE STORY OF A RUNAWAY SLAVE
NO. 1268

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

"Perhaps he therefore departed for a season,
that you should receive him forever."
Philemon 1:15.

NATURE is selfish, but grace is loving. He who boasts that he cares for nobody and nobody cares for him, is the reverse of a Christian, for Jesus Christ enlarges the heart when He cleanses it. None so tender and sympathetic as our Master and if we are truly His disciples, the same mind will be in us which was also in Christ Jesus. The apostle Paul was eminently large-hearted and sympathetic. Surely he had enough to do at Rome to bear his own troubles and to preach the gospel. If, like the priest in the parable of the Good Samaritan, he had, "passed by on the other side," he might have been excused, for he was on the urgent business of that Master who once said to His 70 messengers, "Salute no man by the way." We might not have wondered if Paul had said, "I cannot find time to attend to the needs of a runaway slave." But Paul was not of that mind. He had been preaching and Onesimus had been converted—and from now on he regarded him as his own son. I do not know why Onesimus came to Paul. Perhaps he went to him as a great many unprincipled persons have come to me—because their fathers knew me. And so, as Onesimus' master had known Paul, the servant applied to his master's friend, perhaps to beg some little help in his extremity. Anyway, Paul seized the opportunity and preached Jesus to him and the runaway slave became a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul watched him, admired the character of his convert, and was glad to be served by him. And when Paul thought it right that he should return to his master Philemon, he took a deal of trouble to compose a letter of apology for him, a letter which shows long thinking, since every word is well selected. Although the Holy Spirit dictated it, inspiration does not prevent a man's exercising thought and care on what he writes. Every word is chosen for a purpose. If he had been pleading for himself, he could not have pleaded more earnestly or wisely. Paul, as you know, was not accustomed to write letters with his own hand, but dictated to a secretary. It is supposed that he had an affection of the eyes and therefore when he did write, he used large capital letters, as he says in one of the epistles, "You see how large a letter I have written unto you with my own hand." The epistle was not a large one, but he probably alluded to the largeness of the characters which he was obliged to use whenever he himself wrote. This letter to Philemon, at least part of it, was not dictated, but was written by his own hand. See the 19th verse. "I, Paul, have written it with my own hand. I will repay it." It is the only note of hand which I recall in

Scripture, but there it is—an I O U for whatever amount Onesimus may have stolen!

Let us cultivate a large-hearted spirit and sympathize with the people of God, especially with new converts, if we find them in trouble through past wrongdoing. If anything needs setting right, do not let us condemn them off-hand and say, "You have been stealing from your master, have you? You profess to be converted, but we do not believe it." Such suspicious and severe treatment may be deserved, but it is not such as the love of Christ would suggest. Try and set the fallen ones right and give them again, as we say, "a fair start in the world." If God has forgiven them, surely we may, and if Jesus Christ has received them, they cannot be too bad for us to receive. Let us do for them what Jesus would have done had He been here—so shall we truly be the disciples of Jesus.

Thus I introduce to you the text, and I notice concerning it, first, that it contains *a singular instance of divine grace*. Secondly, it brings before us *a case of sin overruled*. And thirdly, it may be regarded as *an example of relationship improved by grace*, for now he that was a servant for a season will abide with Philemon all his lifetime and be no more a servant, but a beloved brother in Christ.

I. But, first, let us look at Onesimus as AN INSTANCE OF DIVINE GRACE.

We see the grace of God in his *election*. He was a slave. In those days, slaves were very ignorant, untaught, and degraded. Being barbarously used, they were for the most part themselves sunk in the lowest barbarism. Neither did their masters attempt to raise them out of it. It is possible that Philemon's attempt to do good to Onesimus may have been irksome to the man and he may, therefore, have fled from his house. His master's prayers, warnings, and Christian regulations may have been disagreeable to him and therefore he ran away. He wronged his master, which he would scarcely have done if he had not been treated as a confidential servant to some extent. Possibly the unusual kindness of Philemon and the trust reposed in him may have been too much for his untrained nature. We know not what he stole, but evidently he had taken something, for the apostle says, "If he has wronged you, or owes you anything, put that on my account." He ran away from Colosse, therefore, and thinking that he would be less likely to be discovered by the ministers of justice, he sought the city of Rome which was then as large as the city of London is now, and perhaps larger. There, in those back slums, such as the Jews' quarter in Rome now is, Onesimus would go and hide. Or among those gangs of thieves which infested the imperial city, he would not be known or heard of any more, so he thought—and he could live the free and easy life of a thief. Yet, mark you, the Lord looked out of heaven with an eye of love and set that eye on Onesimus.

Were there no free men that God must elect a slave? Were there no faithful servants that He must choose one who had embezzled his master's money? Were there none of the educated and polite that He must look upon a barbarian? Were there none among the moral and the excellent that infinite love should fix itself upon this degraded being who was

now mixed up with the very scum of society? And what the scum of society was in old Rome I should not like to think, for the upper classes were about as brutalized in their general habits as we can very well conceive. What the lowest scum of all must have been, none of us can tell. Onesimus was part and parcel of the dregs of a sink of sin. Read Paul's first chapter of the epistle to the Romans, if you can, and you will see in what a horrible state the heathen world was at that time. And Onesimus was among the worst of the worst. And yet eternal love, which passed by kings and princes and left Pharisees and Sadducees, philosophers and magi to stumble in the dark as they chose, fixed its eyes upon this poor benighted creature that he might be made a vessel to honor, fit for the Master's use.—

"When the Eternal bows the skies
To visit earthly things,
With scorn divine He turns His eyes
From towers of haughty kings.
He bids His awful chariot roll
Far downward from the skies,
To visit every humble soul,
With pleasure in His eyes.
Why should the Lord that reigns above
Disdain so lofty kings?
Say, Lord, and why such looks of love
Upon such worthless things?
Mortals are dumb; what creature dares
Dispute His awful will?
Ask no account of His affairs,
But tremble and be still.
Just like His nature is His grace,
All sovereign, and all free
Great God, how searchless are Your ways
How deep your judgments be!"

"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," rolls like thunder from the cross of Calvary and from the Mount of Sinai. The Lord is a sovereign and does as He pleases. Let us admire that marvelous electing love which selected such a one as Onesimus!

Grace also is to be observed in the next place in the *conversion* of this runaway slave.

Look at him! How unlikely he appears to become a convert. He is an Asiatic slave of about the same grade as an ordinary East Indian sailor or heathen Chinese. He was, however, worse than the ordinary East Indian sailor, who is certainly free and probably an honest man, if he is nothing else. This man had been dishonest and he was daring, for after taking his master's property he was bold enough to make a long journey from Colosse to reach Rome. But everlasting love means to convert the man—and converted he shall be. He may have heard Paul preach at Colosse and Athens, but yet he had not been impressed. In Rome, Paul was not preaching in St. Peter's—it was in no such noble building. Paul was not preaching in a place like the Tabernacle, where Onesimus could have a comfortable seat—no such place as that—but it was probably down there

at the back of the Palatine Hill, where the praetorian guard have their lodgings and where there was a prison called the Praetorian. In a bare room in the barrack prison, Paul sat with a soldier chained to his hand, preaching to all who were admitted to hear him—and there it was that the grace of God reached the heart of this wild young man, and, oh, what a change it made in him immediately! Now you see him repenting of his sin, grieved to think he has wronged a good man, vexed to see the depravity of his heart as well as the error of his life. He weeps. Paul preaches to him Christ crucified and the glance of joy is in his eye—and from that heavy heart a load is taken. New thoughts light up that dark mind. The very face is changed and the entire man renewed, for the grace of God can turn a lion into a lamb, the raven into a dove.

Some of us, I have no doubt, are quite as wonderful instances of divine election and effectual calling as Onesimus was. Let us, therefore, record the loving-kindness of the Lord and let us say to ourselves, "Christ shall have the glory of it. The Lord has done it and unto the Lord be honor, world without end."

The grace of God was conspicuous in *the character which it worked in Onesimus* upon his conversion, for he appears to have been helpful, useful, and profitable. So Paul says. Paul was willing to have had him as an associate and it is not every man that is converted that we should altogether choose as a companion. There are odd people to be met with who will go to heaven, we have no doubt, for they are pilgrims on the right way. But we would like to keep on the other side of the road, for they are cross-grained and there is a something about them that one's nature can no more delight in than the palate can take pleasure in nauseous medicine. They are a sort of spiritual hedgehogs—they are alive and useful and no doubt, they illustrate the wisdom and patience of God—but they are not good companions. One would not like to carry them in his bosom. But Onesimus was evidently of a kind, tender, loving spirit. Paul at once called him brother and would have liked to retain him. When he sent him back, was it not a clear proof of a change of heart in Onesimus that he would go back? Away as he was in Rome, he might have passed on from one town to another and have remained perfectly free. But feeling that he was under some kind of bond to his master—especially since he had injured him—he takes Paul's advice to return to his old position. He will go back and take a letter of apology or introduction to his master, for he knows that it is his duty to make reparation for the wrong that he has done. I always like to see a resolve to make restitution of former wrongs in people who profess to be converted. If they have taken any money wrongfully, they ought to repay it. It would be well if they returned sevenfold. If we have, in any way, robbed or wronged another, I think the first instincts of grace in the heart will suggest compensation in all ways within our power. Do not think it is to be got over by saying, "God has forgiven me and therefore I may leave it." No, dear friend, but inasmuch as God has forgiven you, try to undo all the wrong and prove the sincerity of your repentance by so doing. So Onesimus will go back to Philemon and work out his term of years with him, or otherwise do Philemon's wishes,

for though he might have preferred to wait upon Paul, his first duty was due to the man whom he had injured. That showed a gentle, humble, honest, upright spirit and let Onesimus be commended for it—no, let the grace of God be extolled for it. Look at the difference between the man who robbed and the man who now comes back to be profitable to his master.

What wonders the grace of God has done! Brethren, let me add—what wonders the grace of God can do! Many plans are employed in the world for the reformation of the wicked and the reclaiming of the fallen—and to every one of these, as far as they are rightly bottomed, we wish good success—for whatever things are lovely and pure, and of good report, we wish them God speed. But mark this word—the true reforming of the drunk lies in giving him a new heart. The true reclaiming of the harlot is to be found in a renewed nature. Purity will never come to fallen women by those hideous Contagious Diseases Acts, which, to my mind, wear, like Cain, a curse upon their forehead. Womanhood will but sink lower under such laws. The harlot must be washed in the Savior's blood or she will never be clean. The lowest strata of society will never be brought into the light of virtue, sobriety and purity except by Jesus Christ and His gospel—and we must stick to that. Let all others do what they like, but God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. I see certain of my brethren fiddling away at the branches of the tree of vice with their wooden saws, but as for the gospel, it lays the axe at the roots of the whole forest of evil. And if it is fairly received into the heart, it fells all the poisonous trees at once—and instead of them, there spring up the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box tree together—to beautify the house of our Master's glory. Let us, when we see what the Spirit of God can do for men, publish the grace of God and extol it with all our might.

II. And now, secondly, we have in our text and its connections, a very interesting INSTANCE OF SIN OVERRULED.

Onesimus had no right to rob his master and run away. But God was pleased to make use of that crime for his conversion. It brought him to Rome and so brought him where Paul was preaching—and thus it brought him to Christ and to his right mind. Now, when we speak of this, we must be cautious. When Paul says, "Perhaps he departed for a season, that you should receive him forever," he does not excuse his departure. He does not make it out that Onesimus did right—not for a moment. Sin is sin, and whatever sin may be overruled to do, yet sin is still sin. The crucifixion of our Savior has brought the greatest conceivable blessings upon mankind, yet none the less, it was "with wicked hands" that they took Jesus and crucified Him. The selling of Joseph into Egypt was the means in the hand of God for the preservation of Jacob and his sons in the time of famine. But his brothers had nothing to do with that and they were, none the less, guilty for having sold their brother for a slave. Let it always be remembered that the faultiness or virtue of an act is not contingent upon the result of that act. If, for instance, a man who has been set on a railway to turn the switch forgets to do it, you call it a very great crime if the train comes to mischief and a dozen people are

killed. Yes, but the crime is the same if nobody is killed. It is not the result of the carelessness, but the carelessness itself which deserves punishment. If it were the man's duty to turn the switch in such-and-such a way, and his not doing so should even by some strange accident turn to the saving of life, the man would be equally blameworthy. There would be no credit due to him, for if his duty lies in a certain line his fault also lies in a certain line, namely, the neglecting of that duty. So if God overrules sin for good, as He sometimes does, it is none the less sin. It is sin just as much as ever, only there is so much the more glory to the wonderful wisdom and grace of God who, out of evil, brings forth good and so does what only omnipotent wisdom can perform. Onesimus is not excused then for having embezzled his master's goods, nor for having left him without permission—he still is a transgressor—but God's grace is glorified.

Remember, too, that this must be noticed—that when Onesimus left his master, he was performing an action, the results of which, in all probability, would have been ruinous to him. He was living as a trusted dependent beneath the roof of a kind master who had a church in his house. If I read the epistle rightly, he had a godly mistress and a godly master and he had an opportunity of learning the gospel continually. But this reckless young blade, very likely, could not bear it and could have lived more contentedly with a heathen master, who would have beaten him one day and made him drunk another. The Christian master he could not bear, so away he went. He threw away the opportunities of salvation and he went to Rome. And he must have gone into the lowest part of the city and associated, as I have already told you, with the very grossest company. Now, had it come to pass that he had joined in the insurrections of the slaves, which took place frequently about that time, as he in all probability would have done had not grace prevented, he would have been put to death as others had been. He would have had a short stay in Rome—half suspect a man and off with his head was the rule towards slaves and vagabonds. Onesimus was just the very man that would have been likely to be hurried to death and to eternal destruction. He had put his head, as it were, between the lion's jaws by what he had done. When a young man suddenly leaves home and goes to London, we know what it means. When his friends do not know where he is, and he does not want them to know, we are aware, within a little while, where he is and what he is up to. What Onesimus was doing, I do not know, but he was certainly doing his best to ruin himself. His course, therefore, is to be judged, as far as he is concerned, by what it was likely to bring him to—and though it did not bring him to it, that was no credit to him—all the honor of it is due to the overruling power of God.

See, brethren, how God overruled all. Thus had the Lord purposed. Nobody shall be able to touch the heart of Onesimus but Paul. Onesimus is living at Colosse. Paul cannot come there, he is in prison. It is necessary, then, that Onesimus should go to Paul. Suppose the kindness of Philemon's heart had prompted him to say to Onesimus, "I want you to go to Rome and find Paul out and hear him"? This evil servant would

have said, "I am not going to risk my life to hear a sermon. If I go with the money you are sending to Paul, or with the letter, I shall deliver it, but I want none of his preaching." Sometimes, you know, when people are brought to hear a preacher with the view of their being converted, if they have any idea of it, it is about the very last thing likely to happen, because they go there resolved to be fireproof, and so the preaching does not come home to them—and it would probably have been just so with Onesimus. No, no, he was not to be won in that way. He must go to Rome another way. How shall it be done? Well, the devil shall do it, not knowing that he will be losing a willing servant thereby. The devil tempts Onesimus to steal. Onesimus does it and when he has stolen he is afraid of being discovered and so he makes tracks for Rome as quickly as he can. And he gets down among the back slums and there he feels what the prodigal felt—a hungry belly—and that is one of the best preachers in the world to some people. Their conscience is reached in that way. Being very hungry, not knowing what to do and no man giving anything to him, he thinks whether there is anybody in Rome that would take pity on him. He does not know anybody in Rome at all and is likely to starve. Perhaps one morning there was a Christian woman—I should not wonder—who was going to hear Paul and she saw this poor man sitting crouched up on the steps of a temple. Perhaps she went to him and spoke about his soul. "Soul?" said he, "I care nothing about that, but my body would thank you for something to eat. I am starving." She replied, "Come with me then," and she gave him bread and then she said, "I do this for Jesus Christ's sake." "Jesus Christ!" he said, "I have heard of Him. I used to hear of Him over at Colosse." "Whom did you hear speak about Him?" the woman would ask. "Why, a short man with weak eyes. A great preacher named Paul, who used to come to my master's house." "Why, I am going to hear him preach," the woman would say, "will you come and hear him with me?" "Well, I think I should like to hear him again. He always had a kind word to say to the poor." So he goes in and pushes his way among the soldiers. And Paul's Master incites Paul to speak the right words. It may have been so, or it may have been the other way—that not knowing anybody else at all, he thought, "Well, there is Paul, I know. He is here a prisoner and I will go down and see what prison he is in." He goes down to the Praetorian and finds him there, tells him of his extreme poverty and Paul talks to him. And then he confesses the wrong he has done and Paul, after teaching him a little while, says, "Now, you must go back and make amends to your master for the wrong you have done." It may have been either of these ways, but at any rate, the Lord must have Onesimus in Rome to hear Paul. And the sin of Onesimus, though perfectly voluntary on his part, so that God had no hand in it, is yet overruled by a mysterious providence to bring him where the gospel shall be blessed to his soul.

Now, I want to speak to some of you Christian people about this matter. Have you a son who has left home? Is he a willful, wayward young man who has gone away because he could not bear the restraints of a Christian family? It is a sad thing it should be so—a very sad thing—but

do not despond or even have a thought of despair about him. You do not know where he is, but God does. And you cannot follow him, but the Spirit of God can. He is going on a voyage to Shanghai. Ah, there may be a Paul at Shanghai who is to be the means of his salvation. And as that Paul is not in England, your son must go there. Is it to Australia that he is going? There may be a word spoken there, by the blessing of God, to your son which is the only word which ever will reach him. I cannot speak it. Nobody in London can speak it. But the man there will, and God therefore is letting him go away in all his willfulness and folly that he may be brought under the means of grace which will prove effectual to his salvation. Many a sailor boy has been wild, reckless, godless, Christless, and at last has got into a foreign hospital. Ah, if his mother knew that he was down with the yellow fever, how sad her mind would be, for she would conclude that her dear son will die away at Havana or somewhere, and never come home again. But it is just in that hospital that God means to meet with him. A sailor writes to me something like that. He says, "My mother asked me to read a chapter every day, but I never did. I got into the hospital at Havana, and when I lay there, there was a man near to me who was dying. And he died one night, but before he died, he said to me, 'Mate, could you come here? I want to speak to you. I have got something that is very precious to me here. I was a wild fellow, but reading this packet of sermons has brought me to the Savior, and I am dying with a good hope through grace. Now, when I am dead and gone, will you take these sermons and read them? And may God bless them to you. And will you write a letter to the man that preached and printed those sermons, to tell him that God blessed them to my conversion and that I hope he will bless them to yourself'?" It was a packet of my sermons, and God did bless them to that young man who, I have no doubt whatever, went to that hospital because there a man who had been brought to Christ would hand to him the words which God had blessed to himself and would bless to his friend. You do not know, dear mother, you do not know. The worst thing that can happen to a young man is sometimes the best thing that can happen to him. I have sometimes thought, when I have seen young men of position and wealth taking to racing and all sorts of dissipation, "Well, it is a dreadfully bad thing, but they may as well get through their money as quickly as ever they can, and then when they have got down to begging they will be like the young gentleman in the parable who left his father." When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in need, and he said, "I will arise and go to my father." Perhaps the disease that follows vice—perhaps the poverty that comes like an armed man after extravagance and debauchery—is but love in another form, sent to compel the sinner to come to himself and consider his ways and seek an ever merciful God.

You Christian people often see the little gutter children—the poor little Arabs in the street—and you feel much pity for them, as well you may. There is a dear sister here, Miss Annie MacPherson, who lives only for them. God bless her and her work! When you see them, you cannot be

glad to see them as they are, but I have often thought that the poverty and hunger of one of these poor little children has a louder voice to most hearts than their vice and ignorance. And God knew that we were not ready and able to hear the cry of the child's sin, so He added the child's hunger to that cry, that it might pierce our hearts. People could live in sin and yet be happy, if they were well-to-do and rich. And if sin did not make parents poor and wretched and their children miserable, we should not see it and therefore we should not awaken ourselves to grapple with it. It is a blessing, you know, in some diseases, when the patient can throw the complaint out upon the skin. It is a horrible thing to see it on the skin, but still it is better than its being hidden inside. Oftentimes the outward sin and the outward misery are a sort of throwing out of the disease so that the eyes of those who know where the healing medicine is to be had is thereby drawn to the disease—and so the soul's secret malady is dealt with. Onesimus might have stayed at home and he might never have been a thief. But he might have been lost through self-righteousness. But now his sin is visible. The unprincipled one has displayed the depravity of his heart and now it is that he comes under Paul's eyes and Paul's prayers and becomes converted. Do not, I pray you, ever despair of man or woman or child because you see their sin upon the surface of their character. On the contrary, say to yourself, "This is placed where I can see it, that I may pray about it. It is thrown out under my eyes that I may now concern myself to bring this poor soul to Jesus Christ, the mighty Savior who can save the most forlorn sinner." Look at it in the light of earnest, active benevolence and awaken yourselves to conquer it. Our duty is to hope on and to pray on. It may be, perhaps, that "he therefore departed for a season, that you should receive him forever." Perhaps the boy has been so wayward that his sin may come to a crisis and a new heart may be given him. Perhaps your daughter's evil has been developed that now the Lord may convince her of sin and bring her to the Savior's feet. At any rate, if the case is ever so bad, hope in God and pray on.

III. Once more. Our text may be viewed as AN EXAMPLE OF RELATIONS IMPROVED. "He therefore departed for a season, that you should receive him forever." *"Not now as a servant, but a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more unto you?"* You know we are a long while learning great truths. Perhaps Philemon had not quite found out that it was wrong for him to have a slave. Some men who were very good in their time did not know it. John Newton did not know that he was doing wrong in the slave trade and George Whitfield, when he left slaves to the orphanage at Savannah, which had been willed to him, did not think for a moment that he was doing anything more than if he had been dealing with horses, or gold and silver. Public sentiment was not enlightened, although the gospel has always struck at the very root of slavery. The essence of the gospel is that we are to do to others as we would that others should do to us—and nobody would wish to be another man's slave—and therefore he has no right to have another man as his slave. Perhaps, when Onesimus ran away and came back again, this letter of Paul may

have opened Philemon's eyes a little as to his own position. Maybe he began to doubt that he was a good master. He had trusted his servant and not treated him as a slave at all, but perhaps he had not regarded him as a brother. And now Onesimus has come back. He will be a better servant, but Philemon will be a better master and a slave-holder no longer. He will regard his former servant as a brother in Christ. Now, this is what the grace of God does when it comes into a family. It does not alter the relations. It does not give the child a right to be pert and forget that he is to be obedient to his parents. It does not give the father a right to lord it over his children without wisdom and love, for it tells him that he is not to provoke his children to anger, lest they be discouraged. It does not give the servant the right to be a master, neither does it take away from the master his position, or allow him to exaggerate his authority—but all round it softens and sweetens. Rowland Hill used to say that he would not give a halfpenny for a man's piety if his dog and his cat were not better off after he was converted. There was much weight in that remark. Everything in the house goes better when grace oils the wheels. The mistress is, perhaps, rather sharp, quick, tart—well; she gets a little sugar into her constitution when she receives the grace of God. The servant may be apt to loiter, be late up in the morning, very slovenly, fond of a gossip at the door. But if she is truly converted, all that kind of thing ends. She is conscientious and attends to her duty as she ought. The master, perhaps—well, he *is* the master and you know it. But when he is a truly Christian man—he has a gentleness, a suavity, and a considerateness about him. The husband is the head of the wife, but when renewed by grace he is not at all the head of the wife as some husbands are. The wife also keeps her place and seeks, by all gentleness and wisdom to make the house as happy as she can. I do not believe in your religion, dear friend, if it belongs to the Tabernacle and the prayer meeting, but not to your home. The best religion in the world is that which smiles at the table, works at the sewing machine, and is amiable in the drawing-room. Give me the religion which blacks boots and does them well, cooks the food and cooks it so that it can be eaten. Measures out yards of calico and does not make them half-an-inch short. Sells a hundred yards of an article and does not label 90 a hundred, as many trades people do. That is the true Christianity which affects the whole of life. If we are truly Christians, we shall be changed in all our relationships to our fellow men and therefore we shall regard those whom we call our inferiors with quite a different eye. It is wrong in Christian people when they are so sharp upon little faults that they see in servants, especially if they are Christian servants. That is not the way to correct them. They see a little something wrong and oh, they are down upon the poor girls as if they had murdered somebody. If your Master, and mine, were to treat us in that style I wonder how we would get on? How quick some are in discharging their maids for small faults; no excuse, no trying the persons again—they must go. Many a young man has been turned out of a situation for the littlest trifle by a Christian employer, when he must have known that he would be exposed to all sorts of risks. And many a servant

has been sent adrift as if she were a dog, with no sort of thought whether another position could be found, and without anything being done to prevent her going astray. Do let us think of others, especially of those whom Christ loves even as He does us. Philemon might have said, "No, no, I won't take you back, Mr. Onesimus, not I. Once bitten, twice shy, sir, I never ride a broken-kneed horse; you stole my money. I am not going to have you back again." I have heard that style of talk, have not you? Did you ever feel like it? If you have, go home and pray to God to get such a feeling out of you, for it is bad stuff to have in your soul. You cannot take it to heaven. When the Lord Jesus Christ has forgiven you so freely, are you to take your servant by the throat and say, "Pay me what you owe?" God forbid that we should continue in such a temper. Be pitiful, easily entreated, and ready to forgive. It is a deal better that you should suffer a wrong than do a wrong—much better that you should overlook a fault which you might have noticed, than notice a fault which you ought to have overlooked—

"Let love through all your actions run,
And all your words be kind,"

is said in the little hymn which we used to learn when we were children. We should practice it now, and—

"Live like the blessed virgin's Son
That meek and lowly child."

God grant we may, of His infinite grace.

I want to say this, and then I have done. If the mysterious providence of God was to be seen in Onesimus getting to Rome, I wonder whether there is any providence of God in some of you being here tonight? It is possible! Such things do happen. People come here that never meant to come. The last thing in the world they would have believed, if anybody had said it, is that they would be here, yet here they are. With all manner of twists and turns they have gone about, but they have got here somehow. Did you miss a train and so stepped in to wait? Did not your ship sail quite so soon as you expected, and so are you here tonight? Say, is that it? I do pray you, then, consider this question with your heart. "Does not God mean to bless me? Has He not brought me here, on purpose, that this night I may yield my heart to Jesus as Onesimus did?" My dear friend, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall have immediate pardon for all sin and shall be saved. The Lord has brought you here in His infinite wisdom to hear that, and I hope that He has also brought you here that you may accept it and so go your way altogether changed. Some three years ago I was talking with an aged minister, and he began fumbling about in his waistcoat pocket, but he was a long while before he found what he wanted. At last he brought out a letter that was well near worn to pieces, and he said, "God Almighty bless you! God Almighty bless you!" And I said, "Friend, what is it?" He said, "I had a son. I thought he would be the stay of my old age, but he disgraced himself and he went away from me, and I could not tell where he went; only he said he was going to America. He took a ticket to sail for America from the London Docks, but he did not go on the particular day that he expected." This aged minister bade me read the letter, and I read it, and it was like

this—"Father, I am here in America. I have found a situation, and God has prospered me. I write to ask your forgiveness for the thousand wrongs that I have done you, and the grief I have caused you, for blessed be God, I have found the Savior. I have joined the church of God here, and hope to spend my life in God's service. It happened thus: I did not sail for America the day I expected. I went down to the Tabernacle to see what it was like, and God met with me. Mr. Spurgeon said, 'Perhaps there is a runaway son here; the Lord call him by His grace.' And he did." "Now," said he, as he folded up the letter and put it in his pocket, "that son of mine is dead, and he is in heaven, and I love you, and I shall do so as long as I live, because you were the means of bringing him to Christ." Is there a similar character here tonight? I feel persuaded there is—somebody of the same sort—and in the name of God I charge him to take the warning that I give him from this pulpit. I dare you to go out of this place as you came in. Oh, young man, the Lord in mercy gives you another opportunity of turning from the error of your ways, and I pray you now, here, as you now are, lift your eyes to heaven, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and He will be so. Then go home to your father and tell him what the grace or God has done for you—and wonder at the love which brought you here to bring you to Christ.

Dear friend, if there is nothing mysterious about it, yet here we are. We are where the gospel is preached and that brings responsibility upon us. If a man is lost, it is better for him to be lost without hearing the gospel than to be lost as some of you will be if you perish under the sound of a clear, earnest enunciation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. How long have some of you been between two opinions? "Have I been so long time with you," says Christ, "and yet have you not known Me?" All this teaching and preaching and invitations—and yet do you not turn?—

"O God, do You the sinner turn,
Convince him of his lost estate.

Let him linger no longer, lest he linger till he rue his fatal choice too late. God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PHILEMON.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—231, 248.

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

"And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; so that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion."
Mark 2:12

IT is very natural that there should be many surprising things in the gospel, for it is remarkable beyond measure that there should be a gospel at all. As soon as I begin thinking of it I exclaim with Bunyan, "O world of wonders, I can say no less" [NKJV says "anything like this."] And I invite you all to join with the multitude in saying with the text, "We never saw it on this fashion." When man had sinned, God might instantly have destroyed our rebel race, or He might have permitted it to exist as the fallen angels do—in a state of enmity to all goodness and in consequent misery. But He who passed the angels by took up the seed of Abraham and looked upon man—that insignificant item in the ranks of creatureship and determined that man should experience salvation and show forth His divine grace. It was a wonderful thing to begin with that there should be a gospel for men. And when we remember that the gospel involved the gift of the only-begotten Son of God. When we remember that it was necessary that God, the invisible Spirit, should be veiled in human flesh. When we think about the fact that the Son of God should become the son of Mary, should be subject to pain and weakness, poverty and shame—when we remember all this, we may expect to find great wonders clustering round such a stupendous fact.

Beholding God in human flesh, miracles no longer strike us as being at all marvelous, for the incarnation of God outmiracles miracle. But we must further remember that in order to bring the gospel to us it was necessary that God should in our nature offer atonement for human sin. Think of it! The holy God making atonement for sin! When the angels first heard of it, they must have been lost in astonishment, for they "never saw it on this fashion." Shall the offended die for the offender? Shall the judge bear the chastisement of the criminal? Shall God take upon Himself the transgression of His creature? Yet so it has been, and Jesus Christ has borne that we might never bear the consequences of sin—no, sin itself. "For the transgression of My people was He stricken." Jesus was made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree." Now, a commonplace result could not be imagined as growing out of a gospel sent to rebellious men, much less a gospel involving the incarnation and the death of the Son of God. Everything in God's creation is made to scale. There is a balance between the dewdrop on the

rose and the most majestic of yonder orbs that adorn the brow of night. Law regulates everything, from a single drop of water to the ocean itself. Everything is proportionate and therefore we are persuaded that in an economy in which we start with an incarnate God and an infinite atonement there must be something very striking. And we ought to be prepared to exclaim frequently, "We never saw it on this fashion." Commonplaces are foreign to the gospel. We have entered the land of wonders when we behold the love of God in Christ Jesus. Romance is outromanced in the gospel. Whatever marvels men are able to imagine, the facts of God's amazing grace are more extraordinary than anything imagination has ever conceived.

I desire at this time to say two or three things to those who are not familiar with the gospel. Some have dropped in here to whom the gospel, as we believe it, is quite a new thing. I want to say to them, first, *do not disbelieve it because it strikes you as being something very strange*. In the second place, remember that *in the gospel there must be amazing and surprising things* and we shall try to set them out before you, hoping that so far from your disbelieving them, faith may be worked in your soul as you hear them. And, thirdly, *if any of these strange things should have happened to you, and you should have to say, "We never saw it on this fashion," then glorify God and give new honors to His name*.

I. First, then, DO NOT DISBELIEVE THE GOSPEL BECAUSE IT SURPRISES YOU. Remember, in the first place, that *nothing stands so much in the way of real knowledge as prejudice*. Our race might have known a great deal more of scientific facts if it had not been so largely occupied and captivated with scientific supposition. Take up books upon most sciences and you will find that the main part of the material is an answer to many theories that have been set up in ages gone by or originated in modern times. Theories are the nuisances of science, the rubbish which must be swept away that the precious facts may be laid bare. If you go to the study of a subject, saying to yourself, "This is how the matter must shape itself," having beforehand made up your mind what the facts ought to be, you will have put in your own way a difficulty more severe than the subject itself could place there. Prejudice is the stumbling block of advance. To believe that we know before we do know is to prevent our really making discoveries and coming to right knowledge. When an observer first discovered that there were spots on the sun he reported it, but he was called before his father confessor and upbraided for having reported anything of the kind. The Jesuit said that he had read Aristotle through several times and he had found no mention in Aristotle of any spots on the sun and therefore, there could be no such things. And when the offender replied that he had seen these spots through glasses, the father told him that he must not believe his eyes—he must believe *him* because it was certain, to begin with, that if Aristotle had not indicated the spots, spots there could not be—and he must not believe it. Now, there are some who come to hear the gospel in that spirit. They have a notion of what the gospel ought to be—a pretty firm and strong cast-iron creed

of their own manufacturing—or a hereditary one which they have received with the old family chest of drawers. And they are, therefore, unprepared to hear candidly and learn. Neither do they turn to Scripture to discover the mind of the Spirit of God, but to find some color for their prejudices. It is easy to show a man a thing if he will open his eyes, but if he shuts his eyes and resolves not to see, the task is difficult. You may light a candle pretty readily, but you cannot do so if it has an extinguisher over it. And there are persons who have extinguished their souls and covered them over with prejudices. They act as judges of what the gospel ought to be and if there is anything said that does not suit their preconceived notions, straightway they are offended. This is very absurd and in a matter in which our souls are concerned, it is something worse than ridiculous. It is dangerous to the highest degree. We ought to come to the preaching of the Word of God praying, "Lord, teach me. Blessed Spirit guide me into all truth. Let me see a doctrine to be in Your Word and I will accept it, though it should shock all my prejudices. Though it should seem to me to be a totally new thing, yet if clearly it is the Word of God, I am willing to receive it and to rejoice in it." God give us such a spirit, so that when we have to say in the words of the text, "We never saw it on this fashion," yet still our prejudices may not prevent our accepting the truth.

Let us remember, dear friends, that *many things which we know to be true would not have been believed by our fathers if they had been revealed to them*. I feel morally certain that there were many generations of Englishmen who, if they could have been informed that men would travel at 40 or 50 miles an hour over the surface of the earth drawn without horses, but by a steam engine, they would have shaken their heads and laughed such a prediction to scorn. Even a little time ago, if someone had prophesied that we should be able to speak across the Atlantic in a single instant and speedily obtain a reply by a cable that should be laid along the ocean's bottom, we ourselves could not have conceived it to be possible. How could it be? And yet these things are common everyday facts with us now. Let us, therefore, expect that when we come to deal with what is more wonderful than creation and far more wonderful than any of the inventions of man, we will meet with things which will be hard to be believed. Let us willingly give up our heart and soul to receive the impress of the truth and constantly exercise a simple faith in what God reveals.

It is well known that *there are many things which are undoubted facts which certain classes of men find it hard to believe*. Some time ago a missionary had told his congregation that in the winter time the water in England became so hard that a man could walk upon it. Now they believed a good deal that he had said, but they did not believe that. And they whispered to one another that the missionary was a great liar. One of them was brought over to England. He came over with the full conviction that it was a most ridiculous thing to suppose that any man could ever walk across a river. At last the frost came, the river was frozen over

and the missionary took his friend down to it. The good man stood on the ice himself but he could not persuade his convert to venture. "No," he said, "I do not believe it." "But you can see it, man." said the other. "Come along with you! Come here!" "No," he said, "I never saw it so. I have lived 50 years in my own country and I never saw a man walk on a river before." "But here I am, doing it," said the missionary, "come along with you!" And he seized his hand and pulled so vigorously that at last the African tried the frozen water and found that it did support his weight. Thus a statement proved to be none the less true because it was contrary to experience. The same rule holds good in the case of the gospel. Yet you must expect to find in it certain things which you could not have believed to be true. But if some of us have proven them to be facts and are living in the daily enjoyment of them, do not stubbornly refuse to try them yourself. If we get you by the hand affectionately and say, "Come on to this river of life. It will bear you; you can walk in safety here. We are doing so and have done so for years," do not act towards us as if we were deceivers. And do not put us off with the absurd argument that the gospel cannot be true because you have not until this time tried it and therefore have no experience of its power. Why, my dear friend, it may be true for all that, just as the ice was a matter of fact, though the friend from Africa had never seen it. He found the ice a reality when he at last ventured upon it, and you will find Jesus Christ and the precious things of the gospel to be sure and firm and true, as we have found them to be, if you will only venture your soul upon them.

I merely mention these things to prepare your mind for the full conviction that *the fact that a gospel statement seems new and astonishing ought not to create unbelief in the mind*. My beloved friend, it may be that you exclaim, "I cannot hope that my sin can be forgiven. I cannot imagine that my heart can be changed. I cannot suppose it possible that, by one simple act of faith, I could be a saved man." No, but do you not see that every man measures things according to his own standard? We measure other people's corn, but we always do it with our own bushel. We even try to measure God by our own standard and there is a text which very sweetly rebukes us for it, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord." What I consider it right to expect from God may, very naturally, be a very different thing from what God may be prepared to give me. Perhaps I judge of His behavior towards me by what I deserve, and if I do so, what can I look for? Or, perhaps, I judge of His mercy by my own, and considering whether I could forgive to 70 times seven—whether, if often provoked, I could still overlook the transgression. I find in my own heart no very great powers of forgiveness and then I conclude that God is as hard and as unwilling to forgive as I am. But we must not so judge. Oh, sinners, *you* must not do so. If you are longing for a great salvation, you must not sit down and begin to calculate the Godhead by inches and measure out the merit of Christ by yards and calculate whether He can do this or can do that. A God—what is there that He cannot do? Did Jesus make an

atonement boundless as His nature? Then what sin is there which that atonement cannot wash away? Judge not the Lord according to human judgement. Know you, O man, that He is no small stream or lake which you can measure, and whose capacity you can calculate—He is a sea without a bottom and without a shore—and all your thoughts are drowned when you attempt to measure Him. Lift up your thoughts as high as you ever will and think great things of God—and expect great things from God—and when you shall have enlarged your expectation and your faith shall have grown to its very utmost, God is able to do exceeding abundantly above what you ask or even think. "Can you, by searching, find out God?" Do you expect that you can exceed Him and desire more and hope for more than He is able to give? O, it cannot be. Consider this—that you are very liable to make a mistake as to what the gospel is. Why? Because your mode of estimating it must naturally be a false one since you judge only from what you know, and what you are capable of, while God is infinitely above all that you know or can conceive.

Further, let me remind you, dear friend, you who are a stranger to the gospel, that when we come to speak of it directly, *you must not disbelieve it on account of its strangeness, for it is clear that many have made a mistake as to what the gospel is*. The Jews who lived in our Savior's day heard the best preacher that ever preached, but they did not understand Him. It was not from lack of a lucid style, for "Never man spoke like this Man," but yet they mistook all that He said. They thought that they knew His meaning, but they did not. And even His own disciples and the apostles, until they were illuminated by the Spirit of God, mistook the meaning of their Master, and knew but little after all His teaching. Should you feel at all astonished if you should have been mistaken, dear friend—you who have never found joy and peace in believing? Is it not possible that you may have been mistaken, after all? The Jews heard the Savior Himself and yet did not understand the truth. Some of them were men of genius and well instructed. There was one especially who was a ruler—a doctor among the Jews—who understood not these things. And when the Savior said to him, "You must be born again," he took it literally—he could not understand the mystic change which the Savior meant to describe. Now, if Nicodemus did not know, and a great many like Nicodemus, may it not happen to be the case that you also have not found out the secret, and are at this moment without the possession of it? Possibly you may be a person of very considerable education and of remarkable gifts and parts. My dear friend, if any people are liable to miss the true sense of the gospel, it is such as you are. It is strange, you will say, that I should make such a remark, but the observation is founded upon fact. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen." Not many of the learned of this world ever learn of Christ. He teaches babes, but leaves wise men to boast in their own folly. The Magi of the East went round about to find the Savior—even with a star to guide them they missed their way. But the humble shepherds from the plains of Bethle-

hem, without a star, went immediately to the place where Jesus was. Ah, it was a good and true remark of Augustine when he said, "While the learned are fumbling to find the latch, the simple and poor have entered into the kingdom of heaven." Simplicity of heart is more helpful to the understanding of the gospel than culture of mind. To be ready to be taught is a better faculty than to be able to teach, as far as the reception of the gospel is concerned. That degree in divinity may stand in your way of understanding the divine God. And the very position that you have taken in the classical studies may render it the more difficult for you to comprehend that which the wayfaring man, though he is a fool, knows by heart. Since it is certainly so, I am not offering you any insult when I say, perhaps dear friend, you may, until this time, have labored under a mistake, and therefore if at any time the gospel should be spoken to you, it would well become you to give it a fair hearing and not to reject it because it appears to be new.

One other remark, and I will go on to the next point, and it is this. The person I am now addressing, and I believe that there are such persons here, if he is the man I mean, must confess *that the religion he now possesses has not done much for him*. You think you know the gospel? But, say—could you die upon what you know? Could you die *now—now*—happily and contentedly with the hope you have? If you could, I thank God and congratulate you. Has your hope which you possess comforted your heart? Do you feel and know assuredly that your sins are forgiven you? Do you look upon God as your Father? Are you in the habit of speaking with Him as a child speaks with his father, confiding in Him and telling all your cares and troubles to Him? If it is so, my dear friend, I rejoice with you. But unless yours is the religion of Jesus Christ, I know you have not found such peace. There are many shapes of what is called, "religion," many, many shapes. But they amount to this—they put a man in a position in which he feels that he is about as good as other people, and as well to do in spiritual things as the average of others—and if he does his best, and acts up to his knowledge and light, he will get better, no doubt. And perhaps when he comes to die, possibly by the assistance of a clergyman or a priest—perhaps by some remarkable experience that he may undergo in the use of sacraments—he may get to heaven. It is the general religion of mankind that they are on a road which they have to follow, and by industriously and carefully pursuing it, they will possibly save themselves by the gracious help of the Lord Jesus Christ. They generally tack that on, of course, to make their self-righteousness look a little more respectable. Now, I say deliberately, as in the sight of God, that such religion is not worth one solitary halfpenny. The religion of the Lord Jesus Christ gives a man a complete, full, free, irreversible pardon of all his sins at once, together with the changing of his nature, the implantation of a new life, and the putting of him into the family of God. And it gives to him these things so that he knows that he has them, consciously enjoys them, and lives in the power and spirit of them—humbly serving the Lord who has done such great things for him. This is the reli-

gion of Christ and this is what we are now going to speak of more fully, while we mention some few things which lead men to say, "We never saw it on this fashion.

II. Our second point was to be that THERE ARE VERY SINGULAR AND SURPRISING THINGS IN THE GOSPEL. Let us mention some of them.

One is this—*that the gospel should come to people whom it regards as incapable*. In the narrative before us the wonder was that the Lord Jesus dealt with a crippled and paralyzed person so far gone that he could not crawl into Christ's presence, but had to be borne by four friends. Look at him! He is incapable and incurable. All that he can do is lie on that bed on which the kindness of friends has placed him—and there he must remain—he can do nothing. Now, the gospel regards every man to whom it comes as unable to do anything good. It addresses you, not merely as paralyzed, but it goes farther and describes you as dead. The gospel speaks to the dead. I have often heard it said that the duty of the Christian minister is to awaken the activities of sinners. I believe the very reverse—he should rather labor to kill their self-trusting activities dead and to make them know that all that they can do of themselves is worse than nothing. They can do nothing, for how can the dead move in their graves? How can the dead in sin accomplish their own quickening? The power which can save does not lie in the sinner—it lies in his God. And if any of you are unconverted, I do not come to tell you something which you are able to do, by the doing of which you can save yourselves, but I warn you that you are lost, ruined, and undone. You have power to stray like lost sheep, but if ever you come back your Shepherd must bring you back, you will never come back of yourselves. You had power to destroy yourselves and you have exercised that power. But now your help does not lie in you, it lies in your God. It is a strange thing that the gospel should represent a man to be in such a desperate condition, but it is a fact. And though it is astonishing, let it not be doubted.

An equally remarkable thing is that the gospel *calls upon men to do what they cannot do*, for Jesus Christ said to this paralyzed man, "I say unto you, Arise, take up your bed and walk." He could not rise. He could not take up his bed and could not walk, and yet he was bid to do it. And it is one of the strange things of the way of salvation that—

"The gospel bids the dead revive.
Sinners obey the voice and live.
Dry bones are raised and clothed afresh,
And hearts of stone are turned to flesh."

We have to say, in the name of Jesus, to the man with the withered arm—whose arm is so withered that we know he has no power in it, "Stretch out your hand." And we say it in God's name. Some of my brethren of a certain order of doctrine say, "It is ridiculous! If you admit that a man cannot do it, it is ridiculous to tell him to do it." But we do not mind being ridiculous—we care little for the censure of human judgement. If God gives us a commission, that commission will prevent our suffering very seriously from the ridicule of other people. "Ezekiel, do you not see

before you that valley of dry bones?" "Yes," he says, "I see them. They are very many and very dry. Lo! Through many a summer the sun has scorched them and through many a winter the fierce winds have dried them till they are as if they had passed through an oven." "Prophet, what can *you* do with these bones? If God means to raise them to life they will be raised, therefore let them alone. What can *you* do?" Listen to him as he makes solemn proclamation. "Thus says the Lord, You dry bones live." "Ridiculous, Ezekiel! They cannot live, why speak to them?" He knows they cannot live of themselves, but he also knows that his Master bids him tell them to live, and he does what his Master tells him. So, in the gospel, the minister is to bid men to believe, and he is to say, "Repent, and believe the gospel." For this reason alone do we say, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." The gospel bids you believe, albeit that you are dead in trespasses and sins. "I cannot understand it," says somebody. No, and you never will till God reveals it to you. But, when the Lord comes and dwells with you, you will perfectly understand and see how the exercise of faith on the part of the preacher of the gospel is a part of the divine operation by which dead souls are raised.

Another and more remarkable thing is this—that while the gospel comes to men incapable and dead, and bids them do what they cannot of themselves do, *they actually do it*—there is the marvel. In the name of Jesus we say to the paralyzed man, "Take up your bed and walk," and he takes up his bed and walks. For with the Word of God faithfully spoken, in confidence in God, there comes the eternal power into the man who had no power of his own. And God's elect, called out by the preaching of the gospel, hear the message from heaven and the power comes with it at the time they hear the message, so that they obey it and live. Dead as they were, they live. O, marvelous operation this—that, out of this congregation, while I say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"—there will be some who will believe and be saved. Those who will believe have no more power naturally to believe than others have—they are by nature all in an equal state of death. But to God's own chosen, the Word comes with power, attended by the Holy Spirit, and they believe and live.

Here are three singular things. It is a strange thing to have to tell you good church people and chapel people who have always done everything so well, that unless you are converted you are dead in trespasses and sins and all your good works are so many grave clothes in which your corpse is wrapped up, and nothing better. And it is strange that we should be bound to call upon you to believe in Jesus when we have already told you that you have no spiritual life. And it is remarkable that we should be commanded to warn you that you are living in great sin if you do not believe in Jesus. More singular still, you may judge it to be, that we are confident that the telling you these things plainly and honestly in the name of God, will be blessed by the Spirit of God, and will lead you to believe and to trust in Jesus. It seems strange, but so it is.

More remarkable still to the crowd, no doubt, was this—that this paralyzed man *was healed at once*. If ever a cure of paralysis is worked at any

time—and it is very rarely that such thing occurs—I do not think that it is ever cured in an instant. This man is unable to move hand or foot, but Jesus says, "Take up your bed and walk," and he rises as if he had never been paralyzed. Every ligament is in its place. Every muscle is ready for action in a moment. You would have thought it would take a month or two, and a good deal of rubbing and friction to bring the man's blood into healthy action, to get him round and warm him into life again. But it did not—he only heard that strange voice which told him to do what he could not do and he did what he could not do by a power that went with that message. And so he rose up and was healed at once. And here is the marvel of the gospel. A sinner hears the gospel and all the sins of his whole life are upon him, but he believes that gospel and all his sins are gone in a moment. And he is as clean before the throne of God as if never a sin had defiled him. He was, up to the time of his reception of the gospel, an enemy to God by wicked works. But he accepts the testimony of God concerning His Son Jesus, he rests in Jesus and his heart becomes as the heart of a little child. In a moment the stone is taken away and the fleshy heart is given—He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. The darkness disappears as the primeval darkness fled before the decree which said, "Let there be light." 'Tis done—done in a moment.

You will not comprehend this, I am sure, till you experience it. Oh how I bless God that years ago when I heard the message of God—"Look unto Me and be you saved all you ends of the earth," I was enabled to look and live. I pined and longed for salvation and labored hard and prayed hard to get it—but I never got one inch the farther. But the message came—"Look!"—how could I look? My eyes were sightless. But I did look, for the power to look came with the command to look, and the moment I looked I was as conscious that I was forgiven as I am conscious of my existence. There was life to me in a look at the Crucified One. Pardon, sure, certain, and sealed home to my conscience, was given to me in the same moment when I looked to Jesus in the bloody sweat, Jesus on the cross, Jesus risen from the dead, and Jesus gone into glory. A look at Him and it was all done. You had not thought of that, you say, and even now it startles you. You thought you would have to take the sacrament and keep on attending a place of worship, and gradually work yourself up out of your paralyzed condition. That is man's way of salvation. But Christ's way of salvation is an instantaneous change of heart and an instantaneous forgiveness of sin.

Another thing which they had never seen after that fashion was that *the man was healed without any ceremony.* The proper way to heal a paralyzed person would have been to fetch the priest down and to bring water and oil, or to shed the blood of a bullock and offer it. And then to go through no end of ceremonies—and through the mysterious power of ceremonies, at last the man might be cleansed. But here was not one single ceremony. It was just this—"Take up your bed and walk." The man, though he cannot take up his bed and walk, yet believes that He who told him to do it will give him power to do it—and he does take up

his bed and walk. There is the whole of it in a nutshell. He believes and acts on that belief, and he is restored. And that is the whole plan of salvation. You believe the gospel and act upon the truth of it, and you are saved—saved the moment you accept the witness of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ. But is there not baptism? Yes, for the saved—but no baptism in order to salvation. When you *are* saved—when you are a believer in Jesus—then the instructive ordinances of God's house become useful to you—but God forbid that we should ever look to baptism as a means of salvation. God forbid that we should even look to the Lord's Supper for that purpose. May we be preserved from anything approximating to trust in rites and forms. When you are saved, then the ordinances of the house into which you have come—the ordinances of the family of which you are a member—belong to you; but they do not belong to you and can render to you no service whatever, until you are a saved man. Salvation from death in sin has nothing to do with ceremonies. Believe and live is the sole gospel precept.

Another remarkable thing was that *this man was perfectly restored*—not merely restored in a moment, but perfectly so. A partial restoration would not have been one-tenth so memorable. I have known dear friends partially paralyzed who, after some time, in the good providence of God, have somewhat recovered. But a twist of the mouth, a weakness in the eyes, or a feebleness of the hand has remained as a proof that the paralysis had been there. But this man was perfectly whole and at once. The glory of salvation is that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus is completely pardoned. It is not some of his sin that is put away, but all of it. I rejoice to look upon it as dear Kent does when he sings—

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

We are plunged into the fountain of redeeming blood and cleansed from every fear of ever being found guilty before the living God. We are accepted in the Beloved through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, justified once and for all forever before the Father's face! Christ said, "It is finished," and finished it is. And O, what a bliss is this—one of the things that may well stagger those who have never heard it before, but let them not reject it because it staggers them. But rather let them say—"This wonderful system which saves and saves completely, in an instant, simply by looking out of self to Christ, is a system worthy of divine wisdom, for it magnifies the grace of God and meets man's deep necessities."

One other thing, no doubt, astonished them about this man—*that his cure was evidently done*. There was no deception about it, for he rolled up the mattress that he had lain upon, put it upon his back and walked away with it and went home to his house. There was no doubt about his being perfectly restored, for he was carrying a burden on his back. And here is the glory of it—that when a man believes in Jesus Christ—there is no doubt about his conversion—you see it in his actions. They tell me that a child is born again in baptism. Very well, let me have a look at the

child. Is there any difference in him? Some of you, perhaps, have had children that were born again in the sacramental fashion. Mine were not. I cannot, therefore, speak from experience. I wonder whether yours have turned out any better than mine—whether, indeed, the watery regeneration made any difference in them. I am persuaded you could not pretend to having seen any result. It is a kind of regeneration that does not show itself in the life and indeed, produces no result—for these precious regenerate babies and regenerate boys and girls are just the same as the unregenerate boys and girls—there is not a pin to choose between them. Send them to the same school and I will undertake very often to show you that some of those that never were baptismally regenerated are better than those who were, for probably they have had Christian parents who had taken more pains to instruct them than those superstitious parents who merely relied upon the outward ceremony. Now, that regeneration which produces no effect is nothing—less than nothing. It would be like saying, "That man is saved from the paralysis." "Well, but he lies on the bed." "Yes, he lies on the bed the same as he did before, but," you say, "he is—he is delivered from the paralysis." "But how do you know?" "Well, of course, it may not be an actual cure, but it is a virtual cure, because he has undergone a ceremony and therefore it must be so. You are to believe it." This is fine talk. But when the man rose and rolled his bed up, and carried it on his back—that was a deal more convincing. Now, when God's providence brings into this house a man who has been a drunk and he hears the gospel of Jesus Christ and believes in Jesus, and turns his cups bottom upwards and becomes a sober man, there is something in that. If a man comes here who is proud, haughty, a hater of the gospel altogether—a man who can swear and who has no regard for the Sabbath—and he believes in Jesus and becomes at home as gentle as a lamb, so that his wife hardly knows that he is the same man. And on the Sabbath he delights to go to the House of God, there is something to be seen in that, is there not?—something real and tangible. Here is a man that would cheat you as soon as look at you in his business. But the grace of God comes to him and he becomes scrupulously honest. Here is a man that used to associate with the lowest of the low and the gospel of Jesus Christ is received by him and he seeks godly companions, and he loves only those whose talk is sweet and clean and holy. Why, you can *see* it. You can *see* it. And this is the kind of salvation we need in these days, a salvation that can be seen—which makes the paralyzed sinner roll up his bed and carry it away—makes him a conqueror over depraved habits—delivers him from the thralldom of his sins and shows itself in the outer life to all who care to look upon him. Yes, brethren, this is what the gospel has done for us. And if I address any here tonight who have looked upon religion as a kind of salve that they were to use while they continued in their sins, I want them to see what a very different thing it is. Christ has come to save you *from* your sins—not to keep you in the fire and prevent your burning—but to pluck you like a brand out of the burning. He has come to make you new creatures and

this He can do at this very moment, while you are sitting in your pews. If, while you hear the sound, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," there is found in you a willing mind, given you of His grace so that you trust Him, you shall be saved as surely as Christ lives.

These are strange things, but do not reject them because they are strange. They are things worthy of a God.

III. So, lastly, IF YOU HAVE EVER FOUND OUT ANY OF THESE THINGS AND HAD TO SAY, "WE NEVER SAW IT ON THIS FASHION," THEN GO AND GLORIFY GOD. Magnify Him from your inmost soul.

If salvation were by works and we could fight our own way to heaven by our own merits, I for one, when I got up there, would throw up my cap and say, "Well done! I have deserved something, and I have got it." But since salvation is by grace from first to last, and not of man, neither by man, nor of the will of the flesh, nor by blood or birth—since the Lord begins, carries on, and ends—let us give Him all the glory. And if ever He gives us, as He will give us, a crown of life that fades not away, we will go and cast it at His feet and say, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be praise forever and ever." Let us live in this spirit, dear friends. The man who believes in the doctrines of grace and yet thinks much of himself is highly inconsistent. A man who believes salvation to be all of grace and yet does not glorify God continually acts contrary to his own convictions. "O, magnify the Lord with me. Let us exalt His name together." He took us up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and He set our feet upon a rock and established our goings. He put a new song into our mouths, even praise forevermore. Praise be unto Him, for He has done it and He shall be extolled.

O, you cannot praise Him, you who do not know this salvation—and I do not exhort you to attempt to do so. But, first of all, may you know this salvation for yourselves. You *can* know it. Blessed be God, I trust that some of you will know it this very night by ceasing from yourselves, giving up all dependence upon anything you can do or be or feel, and by dropping into the arms of Jesus, resting in His finished work and confiding in Him. He will—he *must* save you if you trust Him—and then you shall give Him praise. God bless you, dear friends, for Christ's sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 2.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—202, 232.

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"GOD WITH US"

NO. 1270

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 26, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"They shall call His name Emmanuel,
which being interpreted is, God with us."
Matthew 1:23.

THOSE words, "being interpreted," salute my ear with much sweetness. Why should the word, "Emmanuel," in the Hebrew, be interpreted at all? Was it not to show that it has reference to us Gentiles and therefore it must be interpreted into one of the chief languages of the then existing Gentile world, namely, the Greek? This, "being interpreted," at Christ's birth and the three languages employed in the inscription upon the cross at His death, show that He is not the Savior of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. As I walked along the wharf at Marseilles and marked the ships of all nations gathered in the port, I was very much interested by the inscriptions upon the shops and stores. The announcements of refreshments or of goods to be had within were not only printed in the French language, but in English, in Italian, in German, in Greek, and sometimes in Russian and Swedish. Upon the shops of the sail makers, the boat builders, the ironmongers, or the dealers in ship supplies, you read a mixture of announcements setting forth the information to men of many lands. This was a clear indication that persons of all nations were invited to come and purchase, that they were expected to come and that provision was made for their peculiar needs. "Being interpreted" must mean that different nations are addressed. We have the text put first in the Hebrew, "Emmanuel," and afterwards it is translated into the Gentile tongue, "God with us," "being interpreted, "that we may know that we are invited, that we are welcome, that God has seen our needs and has provided for us, and that now we may freely come, even we who were sinners of the Gentiles and far off from God. Let us preserve with reverent love both forms of the precious name and wait the happy day when our Hebrew brethren shall unite their, "Emmanuel," with our, "God with us."

Our text speaks of a *name* of our Lord Jesus. It is said, "They shall call His *name* Emmanuel." In these days we call children by names which have no particular meaning. They are the names, perhaps, of father or mother, or some respected relative, but there is no special meaning as a general rule in our children's names. It was not so in the olden times. Then names meant something. Scriptural names, as a general rule,

contain teaching, and especially is this the case in every name ascribed to the Lord Jesus. With Him names indicate things. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," because He really is all these. His name is called Jesus, but not without a reason. By any other name Jesus would not be so sweet, because no other name could fairly describe His great work of saving His people from their sins. When He is said to be called this or that, it means that He really is so. I am not aware that anywhere in the New Testament our Lord is afterwards called Emmanuel. I do not find His apostles, or any of His disciples, calling Him by that name literally. But we find them all doing so in effect, for they speak of Him as, "God manifest in the flesh." And they say, "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." They do not use the actual word, but they again interpret and give us free and instructive renderings while they proclaim the sense of the august title and inform us in many ways what is meant by God being with us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a glorious fact of the highest importance that, since Christ was born into the world, God is with us.

You may divide the text, if you please, into two portions—"GOD," and then, "GOD WITH US." We must dwell with equal emphasis upon each word. Never let us for a moment hesitate as to the Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ, for His Deity is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. It may be we shall never fully understand how God and man could unite in one person, for who can by searching find out God? These great mysteries of godliness, these "deep things of God," are beyond our measurement. Our little skiff might be lost if we ventured so far out upon this vast, this infinite ocean, as to lose sight of the shore of plainly revealed truth. But let it remain as a matter of faith that Jesus Christ, even He who lay in Bethlehem's manger and was carried in a woman's arms, and lived a suffering life and died on a malefactor's cross, was, nevertheless, "God over all, blessed forever," "upholding all things by the word of His power." He was not an angel—that the apostle has abundantly disproved in the first and second chapters of the epistle to the Hebrews—He could not have been an angel, for honors are ascribed to Him which were never bestowed on angels. He was no subordinate Deity or was elevated to the Godhead, as some have absurdly said—all these things are dreams and falsehoods. He was as surely God as God can be, one with the Father and the ever-blessed Spirit. If it were not so, not only would the great strength of our hope be gone, but as to this text the sweetness would be evaporated altogether. The very essence and glory of the incarnation is that He was God who was veiled in human flesh. If it were any other being who thus came to us in human flesh, I see nothing very remarkable in it, certainly nothing comforting. That an angel should become a man is a matter of no great consequence to me. That some other superior being should assume the nature of man brings no joy to my heart and opens no well of consolation to me. But "God with us" is exquisite delight. "GOD with us"—all that "GOD" means—the Deity, the infinite Jehovah with us. This, this is worthy of the burst of midnight song when angels startled the shepherds with their car-

ols, singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." This was worthy of the foresight of seers and prophets, worthy of a new star in the heavens, worthy of the care which inspiration has manifested to preserve the record. This, too, was worthy of the martyr deaths of apostles and confessors who counted not their lives dear unto them for the sake of the incarnate God. And this, my brethren, is worthy at this day of your most earnest endeavors to spread the glad tidings. It is worthy of a holy life to illustrate its blessed influences and worthy of a joyful death to prove its consoling power. Here is the first truth of our holy faith—"Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." He who was born at Bethlehem is God and "God with us." God—there lies the majesty. "God with us"—there lies the mercy. *God*—there is glory. "God *with us*"—there is grace. God alone might well strike us with terror, but "God with us" inspires us with hope and confidence. Take my text as a whole and carry it in your bosoms as a bundle of sweet spices to perfume your hearts with peace and joy. May the Holy Spirit open to you the truth and the truth to you. I would joyfully say to you in the words of one of our poets—

"Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with men to appear,
Jesus our Immanuel here."

First, *let us admire this truth.* Then *let us consider it more at length,* and after that *let us endeavor personally to appropriate it.*

I. LET US ADMIRE THIS TRUTH. "God with us." Let us stand at a reverent distance from it as Moses when he saw God in the bush stood a little back and took his shoes off, feeling that the place where he stood was holy ground. This is a wonderful fact, God the Infinite once dwelt in the frail body of a child and tabernacled in the suffering form of a lowly man. "God was in Christ." "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

Observe first, the wonder of *condescension* contained in this fact, that God, who made all things, should assume the nature of one of His own creatures. That the self-existent should be united with the dependent and deprived, and the Almighty linked with the feeble and mortal. In the case before us, the Lord descended to the very depth of humiliation and entered into alliance with a nature which did not occupy the chief place in the scale of existence. It would have been great condescension for the infinite and incomprehensible Jehovah to have taken upon Himself the nature of some noble spiritual being, such as a seraph or a cherub. The union of the divine with a created spirit would have been an immeasurable stoop—but for God to be one with man is far more. Remember that in the person of Christ, manhood was not merely a quickening spirit, but also suffering, hungering, dying flesh and blood. There was taken to Himself by our Lord all that materialism which makes up a body and a body is after all but the dust of the earth—a structure fashioned from the ma-

terials around us. There is nothing in our bodily frame but what is to be found in the substance of the earth on which we live. We feed upon that which grows out of the earth and when we die we go back to the dust from which we were taken. Is not this a strange thing that this grosser part of creation, this meaner part, this dust of it, should, nevertheless, be taken into union with that pure, marvelous, incomprehensible, divine being of whom we know so little, and can comprehend nothing at all? Oh, the condescension of it! I leave it to the meditations of your quiet moments. Dwell on it with care. I am persuaded that no man has any idea how wonderful a stoop it was for God thus to dwell in human flesh and to be, "God with us."

Yet, to make it appear still more remarkable, remember that the creature whose nature Christ took was a being that had sinned. I can more readily conceive the Lord's taking upon Himself the nature of a race which had never fallen. But, lo, the race of man stood in rebellion against God and yet Christ became a man that He might deliver us from the consequences of our rebellion and lift us up to something higher than our pristine purity. "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh has condemned sin in the flesh." "Oh, the depths," is all that we can say as we look on and marvel at this stoop of divine love.

Note, next, as you view this marvel at a distance, what a *miracle of power* is before us. Have you ever thought of the power displayed in the Lord's fashioning a body capable of union with Godhead? Our Lord was incarnate in a body, which was truly a human body, but yet in some wondrous way was prepared to sustain the indwelling of Deity. Contact with God is terrible—"He looks on the earth and it trembles. He touches the hills and they smoke." He puts His feet on Paran and it melts and Sinai dissolves in flames of fire. So strongly was this truth inwrought into the minds of the early saints that they said, "No man can see God's face and live." And yet here was a manhood which did not merely see the face of God, but which was inhabited by Deity. What human frame was this which could abide the presence of Jehovah! "A body have You prepared Me." This was, indeed, a body curiously worked, a holy thing, a special product of the Holy Spirit's power. It was a body like our own, with nerves as sensitive and muscles as readily strained. It was a body with every organization as delicately fashioned as our own and yet God was in it. It was a frail boat to bear such freight. Oh, man Christ, how could You bear the Deity within You! We know not how it was, but God knows. Let us adore this hiding of the Almighty in human weakness, this comprehending of the Incomprehensible, this revealing of the Invisible, this localization of the Omnipresent. Alas, I do but babble! What are words when we deal with such an unutterable truth? Suffice it to say that the divine power was wonderfully seen in the continued existence of the materialism of Christ's body—which otherwise had been consumed for such a wondrous contact with divinity. Admire the power which dwelt in, "God with us."

Again, as you gaze upon the mystery, consider what *an ensign of good will* this must be to the sons of men. When the Lord takes manhood into union with Himself in this matchless way, it must mean good to man. God cannot mean to destroy that

race which He thus weds unto Himself. Such a marriage as this, between man and God, must mean peace. War and destruction are never thus predicted. God incarnate in Bethlehem, to be adored by shepherds, foretells nothing but "peace on earth and mercy mild." O you sinners who tremble at the thought of the divine wrath, as well you may, lift up your heads with joyful hope of mercy and favor, for God must be full of grace and mercy to that race which He so distinguishes above all others by taking it into union with Himself. Be of good cheer, O men born of women, and expect untold blessings for "unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given." If you look at rivers you can often tell from where they come and the soil over which they have flowed by their color. Those which flood from melting glaciers are known at once. There is a text concerning a heavenly river which you will understand if you look at it in this light—"He showed me a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and *of the Lamb*." Where the throne is occupied by Godhead and the appointed Mediator, the incarnate God, the once bleeding Lamb, then the river most be pure as crystal and be a river, not of molten lava of devouring wrath, but a river of the water of life. Look to "God with us" and you will see that the consequences of incarnation must be pleasant, profitable, saving, and ennobling to the sons of men.

I pray you to continue your admiring glance and look upon God with us once more *as a pledge of our deliverance*. We are a fallen race. We are sunk in the mire. We are sold under sin, in bondage and in slavery to Satan. But if God comes to our race and espouses its nature, why then we must retrieve our fall—it cannot be possible for the gates of hell to keep those down who have God with them. Slaves under sin and bondsmen beneath the law, hearken to the trumpet of jubilee, for one has come among you, born of a woman, made under the law, who is also Mighty God pledged to set you free. He is a Savior and a great one. He is able to save for He is Almighty, and pledged to do it for He has entered the fight and put on the harness for the battle. The champion of His people is one who will not fail nor be discouraged till the battle is fully fought and won. Jesus, coming down from heaven, is the pledge that He will take His people up to heaven. His taking our nature is the seal of our being lifted up to His throne. Were it an angel that had interposed, we might have some fears. Were it a mere man, we might go beyond fear and sit down in despair. But if it is "God with us" and God has actually taken manhood into union with Himself, then let us "ring the bells of heaven" and be glad. There must be brighter and happier days. There must be salvation for man. There must be glory to God. Let us bask in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness who now has risen upon us—a light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of His people Israel.

Thus we have admired at a distance.

II. And, now, in the second place, let us come nearer and CONSIDER THE SUBJECT MORE CLOSELY. What is this? What does this mean, "God with us"? I do not expect, this morning, to be able to set forth all the meaning of this short text, "God with us," for indeed it seems to me to contain the whole history of redemption. It

hints at man's being without God and God's having removed from man on account of sin. It seems to tell me of man's spiritual life by Christ's coming to him and being formed in him the hope of glory. God communes with man and man returns to God and receives again the divine image as at the first. Yes, heaven itself is "God with us." This text might serve for a hundred sermons without any wire drawing. Yes, one might continue to expatiate upon its manifold meanings forever. I can only at this time give mere hints of lines of thought which you can pursue at your leisure, the Holy Spirit enabling you.

This glorious word Emmanuel means, first, that God in Christ is *with us in very near association*. The Greek particle here used is very forcible and expresses the strongest form of "*with*." It is not merely, "in company with us," as another Greek word would signify, but "with," "together with," and "sharing with." This preposition is a close rivet, a firm bond, implying, if not declaring, close fellowship. God is peculiarly and closely "with us." Now, think for a while and you will see that God has, in very deed, come near to us in very close association. He must have done so, for *He has taken upon Himself our nature,* literally our nature—flesh, blood, bone, everything that made a body—mind, heart, soul, memory, imagination, judgement, everything that makes a rational man. Christ Jesus was the man of men, the second Adam, the model representative man. Think not of Him as a deified man any more than you would dare to regard Him as a humanized God or demigod. Do not confuse the natures nor divide the person—He is but one person, yet very man as He is also very God. Think of this truth, then, and say, "He who sits on the throne is such as I am, sin alone excepted." No, 'tis too much for speech, I will not speak of it. It is a theme which masters me, and I fear to utter rash expressions. Turn this truth over and over and see if it is not sweeter than honey and the honey-comb—

"Oh joy! There sits in our flesh,
Upon a throne of light,
One of a human mother born,
In perfect Godhead bright!"

Being with us in our nature, God was with us in *all our life's pilgrimage*. Scarcely can you find a halting place in the march of life at which Jesus has not paused, or a weary league which He has not traversed. From the gate of entrance even to the door which closes life's way, the footprints of Jesus may be traced. Were you in the cradle? He was there. Were you a child under parental authority? Christ was also a boy in the home at Nazareth. Have you entered upon life's battle? Your Lord and Master did the same, and though He lived not to old age, yet through incessant toil and suffering, He bore the marred visage which attends a battered old age. Are you alone? So was He, in the wilderness and on the mountain's side, and in the garden's gloom. Do you mix in public society? So did He labor in the thickest crowds. Where can you find yourself, on the hilltop, or in the valley, on the land or on the sea, in the daylight or in darkness—where, I say, can you be without discovering that Jesus has been there

before you? What the world has said of her great poet we might with far more truth say of our Redeemer—

"A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome."

One harmonious man He was, and yet all saintly lives seem to be condensed in His. Two believers may be very unlike each other, and yet both will find that Christ's life has in it points of likeness to their own. One shall be rich and another shall be poor. One actively laborious and another patiently suffering, and yet each man, in studying the history of the Savior, shall be able to say—His pathway ran hard by my own. He was made in all points like unto His brethren. How charming is the fact that our Lord is "God with us," not here and there, and now and then, but forever.

Especially does this come out with sweetness in His being "God with us" *in our sorrows*. There is no pang that rends the heart—I might almost say not one which disturbs the body—but what Jesus Christ has been with us in it all. Do you feel the sorrows of poverty? He "had not where to lay His head." Do you endure the griefs of bereavement? Jesus "wept" at the tomb of Lazarus. Have you been slandered for righteousness' sake and has it vexed your spirit? He said, "Reproach has broken My heart." Have you been betrayed? Do not forget that He, too, had His familiar friend who sold Him for the price of a slave. On what stormy seas have you been tossed which have not also roared around His boat? Never a glen of adversity so dark, so deep, apparently so pathless, but what in stooping down you may discover the footprints of the Crucified One. In the fires and in the rivers, in the cold night and under the burning sun, He cries, "I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am both your companion and your God."

Mysteriously true is it that when you and I shall come to *the last, the closing scene*, we shall find that Emmanuel has been there. He felt the pangs and throes of death. He endured the bloody sweat of agony and the parching thirst of fever. He knew the separation of the tortured spirit from the poor fainting flesh and cried, as we shall, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." Yes, and the grave He knew, for there He slept and left the sepulcher perfumed and furnished to be a couch of rest and not a morgue of corruption. That new tomb in the garden makes Him God with us till the resurrection shall call us from our beds of clay to find Him God with us in newness of life. We shall be raised up in His likeness and the first sight our opening eyes shall see shall be the incarnate God. "I know that my Redeemer lives, and though after my skin worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." "God with us." I in my flesh shall see Him as the man, the God. And so *to all eternity,* He will maintain the most intimate association with us. As long as ages roll, He shall be "God with us." Has He not said, "Because I live you shall live also"? Both His human and divine life will last on forever and so shall our life endure. He shall dwell among us and lead us to living fountains of waters and so shall we be forever with the Lord.

Now, my brethren, if you will review these thoughts, you shall find a good store of food. In fact, a feast even under that one head. God in Christ is with us in the nearest possible association.

But, secondly, *God in Christ is with us in the fullest reconciliation.* This of course is true if the former is true. There was a time when we were parted from God. We were without God, being alienated from Him by wicked works. And God was also removed from us by reason of the natural righteousness of character which thrusts iniquity far from Him. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, neither can evil dwell with Him. That strict justice with which He rules the world requires that He should hide His face from a sinful generation. A God who looks with complacency upon guilty men is not the God of the Bible, who is in multitudes of places set forth as burning with indignation against the wicked. "The wicked and him that loves violence His soul hates." But now the sin which separated us from God has been put away by the blessed sacrifice of Christ upon the tree. And the righteousness, the absence of which causes a gulf between unrighteous man and righteous God that righteousness, I say, has been found, for Jesus has brought in everlasting righteousness. So that now, in Jesus, God is with us, reconciled to us—the sin which caused His wrath is forever put away from His people. There are some who object to this view of the case and I, for one, will not yield one jot to their objections. I do not wonder that they quibble at certain unwise statements which I like no better than they do. But nevertheless, if they oppose the atonement as making recompense to injured justice, their objections shall have no force with me. It is most true that God is always love, but His stern justice is not opposed thereto. It is also most certainly true that towards His people He always was, in the highest sense, love and the atonement is the result and not the cause of divine love. Yet, still viewed in His righteous character, as a judge and lawgiver, God is "angry with the wicked every day," and apart from the reconciling sacrifice of Christ, His own people were "heirs of wrath even as others." There was anger in the heart of God, as a righteous judge against those who broke His holy law, and the reconciliation has a bearing upon the position of the judge of all the earth as well as upon man. I, for one, shall never cease to say, "O Lord, I will praise You, for though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comfort me." God can now be with man and embrace sinners as His children, as He could not have righteously done had not Jesus died. In this sense, and in this sense only, did Dr. Watts write some of his hymns which have been so fiercely condemned. I take leave to quote two verses, and to commend them as setting forth a great truth if the Lord is viewed as a judge and represented as the awakened conscience of man rightly perceives Him. Our poet says of the throne of God—

"Once 'twas the seat of dreadful wrath,
And shot devouring flames.
Our God appeared, consuming fire,
And vengeance was His name.
Rich were the drops of Jesus' blood,

Which earned His frowning face,
Which sprinkled o'er the burning throne,
And turned the wrath to grace."

So that now Jehovah is not God against us, but "God with us," He has "reconciled us to Himself by the death of His Son."

A third meaning of the text "God with us" is this, *God in Christ is with us in blessed communication.* That is to say, now He has come so near to us as to enter into commerce with us and this He does in part by hallowed conversation. Now He speaks to us and in us. He has, in these last days, spoken to us by His Son and by the divine Spirit with the still small voice of warning, consolation, instruction, and direction. Are you not conscious of this? Since your souls have come to know Christ, have you not also enjoyed communion with the Most High? Now, like Enoch, you "walk with God," and like Abraham, you talk with Him as a man talks with his friend. What are those prayers and praises of yours but the speech which you are permitted to have with the Most High? And He replies to you when His Spirit seals home the promise or applies the precept, when with fresh light He leads you into the doctrine or bestows brighter confidence as to good things to come. Oh yes, God is with us now, so that when He cries, "Seek you My face," our heart says to Him, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." These Sabbath gatherings—what do they mean to many of us but "God with us"? That communion table—what does it mean but "God with us"? O, how often, in the breaking of bread and the pouring forth of the wine in the memory of His atoning death have we enjoyed His real presence, not in a superstitious, but in a spiritual sense, and found the Lord Jesus to be "God with us"? Yes, in every holy ordinance, in every sacred act of worship, we now find that there is a door opened in heaven and a new and living way by which we may come to the throne of grace. Is not this a joy better than all the riches of earth could buy?

And it is not merely in speech that the Lord is with us, but God is with us now by powerful *acts* as well as words. "God with us," why it is the inscription upon our royal standard which strikes terror to the heart of the foe and cheers the sacramental host of God's elect. Is not this our war cry, "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge"? As to our foes within, God is with us to overcome our corruptions and frailties. And as to the adversaries of the truth without, God is with His church and Christ has promised that He always will be with her, "even to the end of the world." We have not merely God's word and promises, but we have seen His acts of grace on our behalf, both in providence and in the working of His blessed Spirit. "The Lord has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the people." "In Judah is God known: His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling place in Zion. There broke He the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle." "God with us"—O, my brethren, it makes our hearts leap for joy. It fills us with dauntless courage. How can we be dismayed when the Lord of hosts is on our side?

Nor is it merely that God is with us in acts of power on our behalf, but in emanations of His own life into our nature by which we are at first new born, and after-

wards sustained in spiritual life. This is more wonderful still. By the Holy Spirit the divine seed which "lives and abides forever" is sown in our souls and from day to day we are strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.

Nor is this all, for as the masterpiece of grace, the Lord by His Spirit, even dwells in His people. God is not incarnate in us as in Christ Jesus, but only second in wonder to the incarnation is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers. Now is it "God with us" indeed, for God dwells in us. "Know you not," says the apostle, "that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?" "As it is written, I will dwell in them, and I will walk in them." Oh, the heights and depths that are comprehended in those few words, "God with us".

I had many more things to say, but time compels me to sum them up in brief. The Lord becomes "God with us" *by the restoration of His image in us*. "God with us" was seen in Adam when he was perfectly pure, but Adam died when he sinned—and God is not the God of the dead but of the living. Now we, in receiving back the new life and being reconciled to God in Christ Jesus, receive also the restored image of God and are renewed in knowledge and true holiness. "God with us" means sanctification—the image of Jesus Christ imprinted upon all His brethren.

God is with us, too, let us remember, and leave the point *in deepest sympathy*. Brethren, are you in sorrow? God is, in Christ, sympathetic to your grief. Brethren, have you a grand objective? I know what it is, it is God's glory—therein also you are sympathetic with God and God with you. What, let me inquire, is your greatest joy? Have you not learned to rejoice in the Lord? Do you not joy in God by Jesus Christ? Then God also joys in you. He rests in His love and rejoices over you with singing, so that there is God with us in a very wonderful respect, inasmuch as through Christ our aims and desires are like those of God. We desire the same thing, press forward with the same aim, and rejoice in the same objects of delight. When the Lord says, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," our heart answers, "Yes, and in Him we are well pleased, too." The pleasure of the Father is the pleasure of His own chosen children, for we also joy in Christ—our very soul exults at the sound of His name.

III. I must leave this delightful theme when I have said two or three things about OUR PERSONAL APPROPRIATION of the truth before us.

"God with us." Then, if Jesus Christ is "God with us," let us come to God without any question or hesitancy. Whoever you may be, you need no priest or intercessor to introduce you to God, for God has introduced Himself to you. Are you children? Then come to God in the child Jesus who slept in Bethlehem's manger. Oh, you grey heads, you need not keep back, but like Simeon come and take Him in your arms and say, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation." God sends an Ambassador who inspires no fear—not with helmet and coat of mail, bearing lance, does heaven's herald approach us—but the white flag is held in the hand of a child, in the hand of one chosen out of the people—in the hand of one who died, in the hand of one who, though He sits in glory,

still wears the nail-prints. O man, God comes to you as one like yourself. Do not be afraid to come to the gentle Jesus. Do not imagine that you need to be prepared for an audience with Him, or that you need the intercession of a saint, or the intervention of priest or minister. Anyone could have come to the babe in Bethlehem. The horned oxen, I think, ate of the hay on which He slept and feared not. Jesus is the friend of each one of us, sinful and unworthy though we are. You, poor ones, you need not fear to come, for look, He is born in a stable and in a manger He is cradled. You have not worse accommodation than His. You are not poorer than He. Come and welcome to the poor man's Prince, to the peasants' Savior. Stay not back through fear of your unfitness—the shepherds came to Him in all their rags. I read not that they tarried to put on their best garments, but in the clothes in which they wrapped themselves that cold midnight they hastened, just as they were, to the young child's presence. God looks not at garments, but at hearts and accepts men when they come to Him with willing spirits, whether they are rich or poor. Come, then. Come and welcome, for God is indeed, "God with us."

But O, let there be no delay about it. It did seem to me, as I turned this subject over yesterday, that for any man to say, "I will not come to God," after God has come to man in such a form as this, were an unpardonable act of treason. Perhaps you knew not God's love when you sinned as you did. Perhaps, though you persecuted His saints, you did it ignorantly in unbelief. But, behold your God extends the olive branch of peace to you. He extends it in a wondrous way, for He Himself comes here to be born of a woman that He may meet with you who were born of women too, and save you from your sin. Will you not listen, now that He speaks by His Son? I can understand that you ask to hear no more of His words when He speaks with the sound of a trumpet, waxing exceedingly loud and long, from amidst the flaming crags of Sinai. I do not wonder that you are afraid to draw near when the earth rocks and reels before His awful presence. But now He restrains Himself and veils the splendor of His face, and comes to you as a child of humble bearing, a carpenter's son. O, if He comes so, will you turn your backs upon Him? Can you spurn Him? What better Ambassador could you desire? This Ambassador of peace is so tenderly, so gently, so kindly, so touchingly put, that surely you cannot have the heart to resist Him? No, do not turn away; let not your ears refuse the language of His grace, but say, "If God is with us, we will be with Him." Say it, sinner, say, "I will arise and go to my Father and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned."

And as for you who have given up all hope, you who think yourselves so degraded and fallen that there can be no future for you—there is hope for you yet, for you are a man—and the next being to God is a man. He that is God is also man, and there is something about that fact which ought to make you say, "Yes, I may yet discover, perhaps, brotherhood to the Son of Man who is the Son of God. I, even I, may yet be lifted up to be set among princes, even the princes of His people, by virtue of my regenerated manhood which brings me into relation with the manhood of Christ and so into relation with the Godhead." Fling not yourself away, O man, you are something

too hopeful after all to be meat for the worm that never dies and fuel for the fire that never can be quenched. Turn to your God with full purpose of heart and you shall find a grand destiny in store for you.

And now, my brethren, the last word to you is let us be with God since God is with us. I give you for a watchword through the year to come, "Emmanuel, God with us." You, the saints redeemed by blood, have a right to all this in its fullest sense. Drink it in and be filled with courage. Do not say, "We can do nothing." Who are you that can do nothing? God is with you. Do not say, "The church is feeble and fallen upon evil times"—no, "God is with us." We need the courage of those ancient soldiers who were desirous to regard difficulties only as whetstones upon which to sharpen their swords. I like Alexander's talk—when they said there were so many thousands, so many millions, perhaps, of Persians, "Very well," says he, "it is good reaping where the corn is thick. One butcher is not afraid of a thousand sheep." I like even the talk of the old Gascon, who said when they asked him, "Can you and your troops get into that fortress? It is impregnable." "Can the sun enter it?" he asked. "Yes." "Well, where the sun can go, we can enter." Whatever is possible or whatever is impossible, Christians can do at God's command, for God is with us. Do you not see that the word, "God with us," puts impossibility out of all existence? Hearts that could never be broken will be broken if God is with us. Errors which never could be confuted can be overthrown by, "God with us." Things impossible with men are possible with God. John Wesley died with that upon his tongue, and let us live with it upon our hearts—"The best of all is God with us." Blessed Son of God, we thank You that You have brought us that word. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews 1.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—249, 256 (VERS. 3, 4), 260.

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END OF VOLUME 21