"THIS YEAR ALSO"
NO. 1451A

A SHORT SERMON
FOR THE NEW YEAR - 1879.
FROM THE SICK CHAMBER OF C. H. SPURGEON.

"This year also."
Luke 13:6.

AT the opening of another year and at the commencement of another volume of sermons, we earnestly desire to utter the word of exhortation, but alas, at this present, the preacher is a prisoner and must speak from his pillow instead of his pulpit. Let not the few words which we can put together come with diminished power from a sick man, for the musket fired by a wounded soldier sends forth the bullet with none the less force. Our desire is to speak with living words or not at all. He who enables us to sit up and compose these trembling sentences is entreated to clothe them with His Spirit that they may be according to His own mind.

The interceding vinedresser pleaded for the fruitless fig tree, "Let it alone *this year also,"* dating as it were a year from the time wherein he spoke. Trees and fruit-bearing plants have a natural measurement for their lives—evidently a year came to its close when it was time to seek fruit on the fig tree and another year commenced when the vinedresser began again his digging and pruning work. Men are such barren things that their fruitage marks no certain periods and it becomes necessary to make artificial divisions of time for them. There seems to be no set period for man's spiritual harvest or vintage, or if there is, the sheaves and the clusters come not in their season and hence we have to say one to another—"This shall be the beginning of a new year." Be it so then. Let us congratulate each other upon seeing the dawn of "this year also," and let us unitedly pray that we may enter upon it, continue in it, and come to its close under the unfailing blessing of the Lord to whom all years belong.

I. The beginning of a new year SUGGESTS A RETROSPECT. Let us take it deliberately and honestly. *"This year also"*—then there had been former years. The dresser of the vineyard was not, for the first time, aware of the fig tree's failure and neither had the owner come, for the first time, seeking figs in vain. God, who gives us "this year also," has given us others before it—His sparing mercy is no novelty. His patience has already been taxed by our provocations. First came our *youthful*

years when even a little fruit unto God is peculiarly sweet to Him. How did we spend them? Did our strength run all into wild wood and wanton branch? If so, we may well bewail that wasted vigor, that life misspent, that sin exceedingly multiplied. He who saw us misuse those golden months of youth, nevertheless affords us "this year also," and we should enter upon it with a holy jealousy lest what of strength and ardor may be left to us should be allowed to run away into the same wasteful courses as before. Upon the heels of our youthful years came those of *early manhood* when we began to muster a household and to become as a tree fixed in its place. Then also, fruit would have been precious. Did we bear any? Did we present unto the Lord a basket of summer fruit? Did we offer Him the first-fruits of our strength? If we did so, we may well adore the divine grace which so early saved us. But if not, the past chides us and lifting an admonitory finger, it warns us not to let "this year also" follow the way of the rest of our lives. He who has wasted youth and the morning of manhood has surely had enough of fooling—the time past may well suffice him to have worked the will of the flesh—it will be a superfluity of haughtiness to suffer "this year also" to be trod down in the service of sin. Many of us are now in the *prime of life* and our years already spent are not few. Have we still a need to confess that our years are eaten up by the grasshopper and the canker-worm? Have we reached the half-way house and still know not where we are going? Are we fools at forty? Are we half a century old by the calendar and yet far off from years of discretion? Alas, great God, that there should be men past this age who are still without knowledge! Unsaved at sixty! Unregenerate at seventy! Unawakened at eighty! Unrenewed at ninety! These are each and all startling words. Perhaps they will fall upon ears which they should make tingle, but they will hear them as though they heard them not. Continuance in evil breeds callousness of heart and when the soul has long been sleeping in indifference, it is hard to arouse it from the deadly slumber.

The sound of the words, "this year also," makes some of us remember *years of great mercy*, sparkling and flashing with delight. Were those years laid at the Lord's feet? They were comparable to the silver bells upon the horses—were they "holiness unto the Lord"? If not, how shall we answer for it if "this year also" should be musical with merry mercy and yet be spent in the ways of carelessness? The same words recall some of us our *years of sharp affliction* when we were indeed dug about and fertilized. How went those years? God was doing great things for us, exercising careful and expensive husbandry, caring for us with exceedingly great and wise care—did we render according to the benefit received? Did

we rise from the bed more patient and gentle, weaned from the world and welded to Christ? Did we bring forth clusters to reward the dresser of the vineyard? Let us not refuse these questions of self-examination, for it may be this is to be another of these years of captivity, another season of the furnace and the refining pot. The Lord grant that the coming tribulation may take more chaff out of us than any of its predecessors—and leave the wheat cleaner and better.

The New Year also reminds us of *opportunities for usefulness* which have come and gone—and of *unfulfilled resolutions* which have blossomed only to fade. Shall "this year also" be as those which have gone before? May we not hope for grace to advance upon grace already gained and should we not seek for power to turn our poor sickly promises into robust action?

Looking back on the past, we lament the follies by which we would not willingly be held captive "this year also," and we adore the forgiving mercy, the preserving providence, the boundless liberality, the divine love of which we hope to be partakers "this year also."

II. If the preacher could think freely, he could carry the text at his pleasure in many directions, but he is feeble and so must let it drive with the current which bears it on to a second consideration—the text MENTIONS A MERCY. It was in great goodness that the tree which cumbered the soil was allowed to stand for another year. Prolonged life should always be regarded as a gift of mercy. We must view "this year also" as a grant from infinite grace. It is wrong to speak as if we cared nothing for life and looked upon our being here as an evil or a punishment. We are here "this year also" as the result of love's pleading and in pursuance of love's designs.

The wicked man should count that the Lord's longsuffering points to his salvation and he should permit the cords of love to draw him to it. O that the Holy Spirit would make the blasphemer, the Sabbath-breaker, and the openly vicious to feel what a wonder it is that their lives are prolonged "this year also"! Are they spared to curse, riot, and defy their Maker? Shall this be the only fruit of patient mercy? The procrastinator who has put off the messenger of heaven with his delays and promises—ought he not wonder that he is allowed to see "this year also"? How is it that the Lord has borne with him and put up with his vacillations and hesitations? Is this year of grace to be spent in the same manner? Transient impressions, hasty resolves, and speedy apostasies—are these to be the weary story over and over again? The startled conscience, the tyrant passion, the smothered emotion! Are these to be the tokens of yet another year? May God forbid that any one of us should hesitate and delay

through "this year also." Infinite pity holds back the axe of justice—shall it be insulted by the repetition of the sins which caused the uplifting of the instrument of wrath? What can be more tantalizing to the heart of goodness than indecision? Well might the Lord's prophet become impatient and cry, "How long halt you between two opinions?" Well may God Himself push for a decision and demand an immediate reply. O undecided soul, will you swing much longer between heaven and hell and act as if it were hard to choose between the slavery of Satan and the liberty of the Great Father's home of love? "This year also" will you sport in defiance of justice and pervert the generosity of mercy into a license for still further rebellion? "This year also" must divine love be made an occasion for continued sin? O do not act so basely, so contrary to every noble instinct, so injuriously to your own best interests.

The believer is kept out of heaven "this year also" in love and not in anger. There are some for whose sake it is necessary he should abide in the flesh—some to be helped by Him on their heavenward way—and others to be led to the Redeemer's feet by His instruction. The heaven of many saints is not yet prepared for them because their nearest companions have not yet arrived and their spiritual children have not yet gathered in glory in sufficient number to give them a thoroughly heavenly welcome. They must wait "this year also" that their rest may be the more glorious and that the sheaves which they will bring with them may afford them greater joy. Surely, for the sake of souls, for the delight of glorifying our Lord, and for the increase of the jewels of our crown, we may be glad to wait below "this year also." This is a wide field, but we may not linger in it, for our space is little and our strengths even less.

III. Our last feeble utterance shall remind you that the expression, "this year also," IMPLIES A LIMIT. The vine-dresser asked for no longer a reprieve than one year. If his digging and fertilizing should not prove successful, he would plead no more and the tree would be cut down. Even when Jesus is the pleader, the request of mercy has its boundaries and times. It is not forever that we shall be let alone and allowed to cumber the ground. If we will not repent, we must perish. If we will not be benefited by the spade, we must fall by the axe.

There will come a last year for each one of us. Therefore let each one say to himself—Is this my last? If it should be the last with the preacher, he would gird up his loins to deliver the Lord's message with all his soul and bid his fellow men be reconciled to God. Dear friend, is "this year also" to be *your* last? Are you ready to see the curtain rise upon eternity? Are you prepared now to hear the midnight cry and to enter into the marriage supper? The judgment and all that will follow is surely the her-

itage of every living man—blessed are they who, by faith in Jesus, are able to face the bar of God without a thought of terror.

If we live to be counted among the oldest inhabitants we must depart at last—there must be an end and the voice must be heard—"Thus says the Lord, this year you shall die." So many have gone before us and are going every hour that no man should need any other memento and yet man is so eager to forget his own mortality and thereby to forfeit his hopes of bliss that we cannot too often bring it before the mind's eyes. O mortal man, think! Prepare to meet your God, for you must meet Him. Seek the Savior, yes, seek Him before another sun sinks to its rest.

Once more, "this year also," and it may be for this year only the cross is uplifted as the lighthouse of the world—the one light to which no eye can look in vain. Oh that millions would look that way and live. Soon the Lord Jesus will come a second time and then the blaze of His throne will supplant the mild radiance of His cross. The Judge will be seen rather than the Redeemer. Now He saves, but then He will destroy. Let us hear His voice at this moment. He has given us another day. Let us be eager to avail ourselves of the gracious season. Let us believe in Jesus this day, seeing it may be our last. These are the pleas of one who now falls back on his pillow in very weakness. Hear them for your souls' sakes and live. Amen.

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THE COVENANT PLEADED
NO. 1451B

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

"Have respect unto the covenant."
Psalm 74:20.

HE will succeed in prayer who understands the science of pleading with God. "Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together," is a divine command. "Come now, let us reason together" is a sacred invitation. "Bring forth your strong reasons, says the Lord," is a condescending direction as to the way of becoming victorious in supplication. Pleading is wrestling—arguments are the grips, the strategies, the throes, the struggles with which we hold and vanquish the covenant angel. The humble statement of our needs is not without its value, but to be able to give reasons and arguments why God should hear us is to offer potent, prevalent prayer. Among all the arguments that can be used in pleading with God perhaps there is none stronger than this—"Have respect unto the covenant." Like Goliath's sword, we may say of it, "There is none like it." If we have God's word for a thing we may well pray, "Do as You have said," for as a good man only needs to be reminded of his own words in order to be brought to keep them, even so is it with our faithful God—He only needs that we remind Him of what He has said to do them for us. If He has given us more than His word, namely, His covenant, His solemn compact, we may then with the greatest composure of spirit, cry to Him, "Have respect unto the covenant," and then we may both hope and quietly wait for His salvation.

I need not tell you for you are, I trust, well-grounded in that matter, that the covenant here spoken of is the covenant of grace. There is a covenant which we could not plead in prayer, the covenant of works, a covenant which destroys us, for we have broken it. Our first father sinned and the covenant was broken. We have continued in his perverseness and that covenant condemns us. By the covenant of works none of us is justified, for we still continue to break our portion of it and to bring upon ourselves wrath to the uttermost. The Lord has made a new covenant with the second Adam, our federal head, Jesus Christ our Lord—a covenant without conditions, except such conditions as Christ has already fulfilled. It is a covenant ordered in all things and sure which now con-

sists of promises only—which run after this fashion—"I will be to them a God and they shall be to Me a people." "A new heart also will I give them and a right spirit will I put within them." "From all their transgressions will I cleanse them." It is a covenant, I say, which once had conditions in it, all of which our Lord Jesus fulfilled when He finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. And now the covenant is all of promise and consists of infallible and eternal shalls and wills which shall abide the same forever.

We shall talk of the text thus—*What is meant by the plea before us,* "Have respect unto the covenant"? Then we will think a little *of where it derives its force*. Thirdly, we will consider *how and when we may plead it.* And we will close by noticing *what are the practical inferences from it.*

I. Let us begin by this—WHAT IS MEANT BY THE PLEA, "Have respect unto the covenant"? It means this, does it not? "Fulfill Your covenant, O God. Let it not be a dead letter. You have said this and that, now do as You have said. You have been pleased by solemn sanction of oath and blood to make this covenant with Your people. Now be pleased to keep it. Have You said and will You not do it? We are persuaded of Your faithfulness, let our eyes behold Your covenant engagements fulfilled."

It means, again, *"Fulfill all the promises of Your covenant,"* for indeed all the promises are now in the covenant. They are all yes and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us. And I may say without being unscriptural that the covenant contains within its sacred charter every gracious word that has come from the Most High, either by the mouth of prophets or apostles, or by the lips of Jesus Christ Himself. The meaning in this case would be—"Lord keep Your promises concerning Your people. We are in want. Now, O Lord, fulfill Your promise that we shall not want any good thing. Here is another of Your promises—'When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.' We are in rivers of trouble. Be with us now. Redeem Your promises to Your servants. Let them not stand on the book as letters that mock us, but prove that You meant what you wrote and said and let us see that You have power to make every jot and tittle good of all You have spoken. For have You not said, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away?' Oh, then have respect unto the promises of Your covenant."

In the connection of our text, there is no doubt that the suppliant meant, "O Lord, prevent anything from turning aside Your promises." The church was then in a very terrible state. The temple was burnt and the assemblage broken up. The worship of God had ceased and idolatrous emblems stood in the Holy Place where once the glory of God shone forth. The plea is, "Do not suffer the power of the enemy to be so great as

to frustrate Your purposes or to make Your promises void." So may we pray—"O Lord, do not suffer me to endure such temptation that I shall fall. Do not suffer such affliction to come upon me that I shall be destroyed, for have You not promised that no temptation shall happen to me but such as I am able to bear and that with the temptation there shall be a way of escape? Now have respect unto Your covenant and so order your providence that nothing shall happen to me contrary to that divine agreement." And it also means, "So order everything around us that the covenant may be fulfilled. Is Your church low? Raise up in her midst again men who preach the gospel with power who shall be the means of lifting her up. Creator of men, Master of human hearts, You who can circumcise human lips to speak Your word with power, do this and let Your covenant with Your church, that You will never leave her, be fulfilled. The kings of the earth are in Your hands. All events are controlled by You. You order all things, from the minute to the immense. Nothing, however small, is too small for Your purposes. Nothing, however great, is too great for Your rule. Manage everything so that in the end each promise of Your covenant shall be fulfilled to all Your chosen people."

That, I think, is the meaning of the plea, "Have respect unto the covenant." Keep it and see it kept. Fulfill the promises and prevent Your foes from doing evil to Your children. Precious plea, assuredly.

II. And now let us see FROM WHERE IT DERIVES ITS FORCE. "Have respect unto the covenant."

It derives its force, first, from *the truthfulness of God.* If it is a covenant of man's making, we expect a man to keep it—and a man who does not keep his covenant is not esteemed among his fellows. If a man has given his word, that word is his bond. If a thing is solemnly signed and sealed, it becomes even more binding and he that would run back from a covenant would be thought to have forfeited his character among men. God forbid that we should ever think the Most High could be false to His word. It is not possible. He can do all things except this—He cannot lie—it is not possible that He should ever be untrue. He cannot even change—the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. He will not alter the thing that has gone out of His lips. When then we come before God in prayer for a covenant mercy we have His truthfulness to support us. "O God, You must do this. You are a sovereign—You can do as you will, but You have bound Yourself by bonds that hold Your majesty—You have said it and it is not possible that You should go back from Your own word." How strong our faith ought to be when we have God's truth to

lean upon. What dishonor we do to our God by our weak faith, for it is virtually a suspicion of the fidelity of our covenant God.

Next, to support us in using this plea, we have God's sacred *jealousy for His honor*. He has told us Himself that He is a jealous God. His name is jealousy—He has great respect unto His honor among the sons of men. Hence this was Moses' plea—"What will the enemy say? And what will You do unto Your great name?" Now, if God's covenant could be trifled with and if it could be proven that He had not kept the promise that He made to His creatures, it would not only be a dreadful thing for us, but it would bring grievous dishonor upon His name and that shall never be. God is too pure and holy and He is altogether too honorable ever to run back from the word that He has given to His servants. If I feel that my feet have almost gone, I may still be assured that He will not suffer me wholly to perish, else were His honor stained, for He has said, "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." He might give me up to my enemies so far as my deserts are concerned, for I deserve to be destroyed by them—but then His honor is engaged to save the meanest of His people and He has said, "I give unto them eternal life." He will not, therefore, for His honor's sake, suffer me to be the prey of the adversary, but will preserve me, even me, unto the day of His appearing. Here is a good foothold for faith.

The next reflection that should greatly strengthen us is *the venerable character of the covenant*. This covenant was no transaction of yesterday—before the earth was, this covenant was made. We may not speak of first or last with God, but speaking after the manner of men, the covenant of grace is God's first thought. Though we usually put the covenant of works first in order of time as revealed, yet in very deed the covenant of grace is the older of the two. God's people were not chosen yesterday, but before the foundations of the world, and the Lamb slain to ratify that covenant, though slain 1800 years ago, was in the divine purpose slain from before the foundations of the world. It is an ancient covenant—there is nothing so ancient. It is to God a covenant which He holds in high esteem. It is not one of His light thoughts—not one of those thoughts which lead Him to create the morning dew that melts before the day has run its course or to make the clouds that light up the setting sun with glory which soon have lost their radiance. No, it is one of His great thoughts—yes, it is His eternal thought, the thought out of His own inmost soul—this covenant of grace. And because it is so ancient and to God a matter so important, when we come to Him with this plea in our mouths we must not think of being staggered by unbelief, but may open our mouths wide, for He will assuredly fill them. Here is Your covenant, O God, which

of Your own spontaneous sovereign will You did ordain of old, a covenant in which Your very heart is laid bare and Your love which is Yourself is manifested. O God, have respect unto it and do as You have said and fulfill Your promise to Your people.

Nor is this all. It is but the beginning. In one sermon I should not have time to show you all the reasons that give force to the plea—but here is one. The covenant has upon it *a solemn endorsement*. There was the stamp of God's own word—that is enough. The very word that created the universe is the word that spoke the covenant. But as if that were not sufficient, seeing we are unbelieving, God has added to it His oath. And because He could swear by no greater, He has sworn by Himself. It were blasphemy to dream that the Eternal could be perjured and so He has set His oath to His covenant in order that by two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie He might give to the heirs of grace strong consolation.

But more, that venerable covenant thus confirmed by oath was *sealed with blood*. Jesus died to ratify it. His heart's blood bedewed that Magna Charta of the grace of God to His people. It is a covenant which God the just *must* keep. Jesus has fulfilled our side of it—has executed to the letter all the demands of God upon man. Our Surety and our Substitute has at once kept the law and suffered all that was due by His people on account of their breach of it. And now, shall not the Lord be true and the everlasting Father be faithful to His own Son? How can He refuse His Son the joy which He set before Him and the reward which He promised Him? "He shall see His seed: He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." My soul, the faithfulness of God to His covenant is not so much a matter between you and God as between Christ and God, for now it so stands—Christ, as our representative, puts in His claim before the throne of infinite justice for the salvation of every soul for whom He shed His blood—and He must have what He has purchased. Oh what confidence is here! The rights of the Son, blended with the love and the truthfulness of the Father, makes the covenant to be ordered in all things and sure.

Moreover, remember, and I will not detain you much longer with this, that up till now nothing in the covenant has ever failed. The Lord has been tried by millions of His people and they have been in trying emergencies and serious difficulties—but it has never been reported in the gates of Zion that the promise has become naught—neither have any said that the covenant is null and void. Ask those before you who passed through deeper waters than yourselves. Ask the martyrs who gave their lives for their Master, "Was He with them to the end?" The placid smiles

upon their countenances while enduring the most painful death were evident testimonies that God is true. Their joyous songs, the clapping of their hands in the fire, and their exultation even on the rack or when rotting in some loathsome dungeon—all these have proven how faithful the Lord has been.

And have you not heard with your own ears the testimony of God's dying people? They were in conditions in which they could not have been sustained by mere imagination, nor buoyed up by frenzy and yet they have been as joyful as if their dying day had been their wedding day. Death is too solemn a matter for a man to play a masquerade. But what did your wife say in death? Or your mother, now with God? Or what of your child who had learned of the Savior's love? Can you not recall their testimonies even now? I think I hear some of them and among the things of earth that are like the joys of heaven, I think this is one of the foremost—the joy of departed saints when they already hear the voices of angels hovering near and turn round and tell us in broken language of the joys that are bursting in upon them—their sight blinded by the excess of brightness and their hearts ravished with the bliss that floods them. Oh it has been sweet to see the saints depart!

I mention these things now, not merely to refresh your memories, but to establish your faith in God. He has been true so many times and never false—and shall we now experience any difficulty in resting on His covenant? No, by all these many years in which the faithfulness of God has been put to the test and has never failed, let us be confident that He will still regard us and let us pray boldly—"Have respect unto the covenant." For, mark you, as it has been in the beginning, it is now and ever shall be, world without end. It shall be to the last saint as it was with the first. The testimony of the last soldier of the host shall be, "Not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised."

Only one more reflection here. Our God has taught many of us to trust in His name. We were long in learning the lesson and nothing but omnipotence could have made us willing to walk by faith and not by sight. With much patience the Lord has brought us at last to have no reliance but on Him and now we are depending on His faithfulness and His truth. Is that your case, brothers and sisters? What then? Do you think that God has given you this faith to mock you? Do you believe that He has taught you to trust in His name and has brought you this far to put you to shame? Has His Holy Spirit given you confidence in a lie? And has He worked in you faith in a fiction? God forbid! Our God is no demon who would delight in the misery which a groundless confidence would be sure to bring to us. If, then, you have faith, He gave it to you and He that gave

it to you knows His own gift and will honor it. He was never false yet, even to the feeblest faith—and if your faith is great, you shall find Him greater than your faith, even when your faith is at its greatest. Therefore be of good cheer. The fact that you believe should encourage you to say, "Now, O Lord, that I have come to rest upon You, can You fail me? I, a poor worm, know no confidence but Your dear name—will You forsake me? I have no refuge but Your wounds, O Jesus; no hope but in Your atoning sacrifice; no light but in Your light—will You now cast me off?" It is not possible that the Lord should cast off one who thus trusts Him. Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Can any of us forget our children when they fondly trust us in the days of their weakness? No, the Lord is no monster. He is tender and full of compassion, faithful and true—and Jesus is a friend which sticks closer than a brother. The very fact that He has given us faith in His covenant should help us to plead—"Have respect unto the covenant."

III. Having thus shown you, dear friends, the meaning of the plea and where it derives its force, we will now pause a minute and observe HOW AND WHEN THAT COVENANT MAY BE PLEADED.

First, it may be pleaded *under a sense of sin*—when the soul feels its guilt. Let me read to you the words of our apostle, in the eighth chapter of Hebrews, where he is speaking of this covenant at the 10th verse. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put My laws into their minds and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Now, dear hearer, suppose that you are under a sense of sin? Something has revived in you a recollection of past guilt or it may be that you have sadly stumbled this very day and Satan whispers, "You will surely be destroyed, for you have sinned." Now go to the great Father and open this page, putting your finger on that 12th verse and say, "Lord, You have in infinite, boundless, inconceivable mercy entered into covenant with me, a poor sinner, seeing I believe in the name of Jesus. And now I beseech You have respect unto Your covenant. You have said, *'I will be merciful to their unrighteousness'*—O God be merciful to mine. You have said, *'Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more'*—Lord, remember no more my sins. Forget forever my iniquity." That is the way to use the covenant. When under a sense of sin, run to that clause which meets your case.

But suppose, beloved brother or sister, *you are laboring to overcome inward corruption* with intense desire that holiness should be worked in you? Then read the covenant again as you find it in the 31st chapter of Jeremiah at the 33rd verse. It is the same covenant, only we are reading another version of it. "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, says the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." Now, can you not plead that and say, "Lord, Your commandments upon stone are holy, but I forget them and break them. But O my God, write them on the fleshy tablets of my heart. Come now and make me holy. Transform me. Write Your will upon my very soul that I may live it out and from the warm impulses of my heart serve You as You would be served. Have respect unto Your covenant and sanctify Your servant."

Or suppose you desire to be *upheld under strong temptation*, lest you should go back and return to your old ways? Take the covenant as you find it in Jeremiah at the 32nd chapter at the 40th verse. Note these verses and learn them by heart, for they may be a great help to you one of these days. Read the 40th verse of the 32nd chapter of Jeremiah. "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." Go and say, "O Lord, I am almost gone and they tell me I shall finally fall, but O my Lord and Master, there stands Your word. Put Your fear in my heart and fulfill Your promise that I shall not depart from You." This is the sure road to final perseverance.

Thus I might take you through all the various needs of God's people and show that in seeking to have them supplied they may fitly cry, "Have respect unto the covenant." For instance, suppose you were in great distress of mind and needed comfort? You could go to Him with that covenant promise, "As a mother comforts her children, even so will I comfort you—out of Zion will I comfort you." Go to Him with that and say, "Lord, comfort Your servant." Or if there should happen to be a trouble upon us, not for yourselves, but for the church—how sweet it is to go to the Lord and say, "Your covenant runs thus—'the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.' O Lord, it seems as though they would prevail. Interpose Your strength and save Your church." If it ever should happen that you are looking for the conversion of the ungodly and desiring to see sinners saved, but the world seems so dark, look at our text again—the whole verse. "Have respect unto the covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty"—to which you may add, "But You have said that Your glory shall cover the earth and that all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Lord, have respect unto Your covenant.

Help our missionaries, speed Your gospel, bid the mighty angel fly through the midst of heaven to preach the everlasting gospel to every creature. Why, it is a grand missionary prayer, "Have respect unto the covenant." Beloved, it is a two-edged sword to be used in all conditions of strife and it is a holy balm of Gilead that will heal in all conditions of suffering.

IV. And so I close with this last question, WHAT ARE THE PRACTICAL INFERENCES FROM ALL THIS? "Have respect unto the covenant." Why, that if we ask God to have respect unto it, *we* ought to have respect unto it ourselves and in this way.

Have a grateful respect for it. Bless the Lord that He even condescended to enter into covenant with you. What could He see in you even to give you a promise, much more to make a covenant with you? Blessed be His dear name, this is the sweet theme of our hymns on earth and shall be the subject of our songs in heaven.

Next, *have a believing respect for it.* If it is God's covenant, do not dishonor it. It stands sure. Why do you stagger at it through unbelief?—

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

Next, *have a joyful respect for it.* Wake your harps and join in praise with David—"Although my house is not so with God, yet has He made with me an everlasting covenant." Here is enough to make a heaven in our hearts while yet we are below—the Lord has entered into a covenant of grace and peace with us and He will bless us forever.

Then have a jealous respect for it. Never suffer the covenant of works to be mixed with it. Hate that preaching—I say not less than that—hate that preaching which does not discriminate between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, for it is deadly preaching and damning preaching. You must always have a straight, clear line, here between what is of man and what is of God, for cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm. And if you have begun with the Spirit under this covenant, do not think of being made perfect in the flesh under another covenant. Be you holy under the precepts of the heavenly Father, but be you not legal under the taskmaster's lash. Return not to the bondage of the law, for you are not under law, but under grace.

Lastly, *have a practical respect for it.* Let all see that the covenant of grace, while it is your reliance, is also your delight. Be ready to speak of it to others. Be ready to show that the effect of its divine grace upon you is one that is worthy of God, since it has a purifying effect upon your life. He that has this hope in Him purifies himself even as He is pure. Have

respect unto the covenant by walking as such people should who can say that God is to them a God and they are to Him a people. The covenant says, "From all their idols will I cleanse them." Then don't love idols. The covenant says, "I will sprinkle pure water upon them and they shall be clean." Then be clean, you covenanted ones, and may the Lord preserve you and make His covenant to be your boast on earth and your song forever in heaven. Oh that the Lord may bring us into the bonds of His covenant and give us a simple faith in His dear Son—for that is the mark of the covenanted ones. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 74.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK."—237, 228, 742.

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THE SICK MAN LEFT BEHIND
NO. 1452A

A SHORT SERMON
FROM THE SICK ROOM OF C. H. SPURGEON.
JANUARY 12, 1879.

"But Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick."
2 Timothy 4:20.

THESE are among the last words of Paul the apostle, for we find them in the closing verses of the last of his epistles. The chapter reminds us of a dying man's final adieu to his best friend, in the course of which he calls to mind the associates of his life. Among his memories of love, we find Paul recollecting Trophimus who had frequently shared with him the perils of rivers and perils of robbers which so largely attended the apostle's career. He had left the good man ill at Miletum and as Timothy at Ephesus was within an easy journey of him, there was no need to add a hint that he should visit him, for he would be sure to do it. The love of Jesus works great tenderness and unity in the hearts of His disciples. The overflow of our Lord's great soul has saturated all His true followers with brotherly affection—because Jesus has loved Paul, Paul loves Timothy, and Timothy must love Trophimus. From this love there arises communion of feeling so that in sympathy they share each other's joys and griefs. When one member rejoices, the body rejoices—and when one member suffers the whole body suffers with it. Trophimus is sick and Paul cannot forget him, though he himself expects in a few weeks to die a martyr's death. Neither would he have Timothy ignorant of the fact, though twice within a few verses he hurries him to come to Rome, saying, "Do your diligence to come shortly unto me." If Timothy could not personally visit the sick friend, yet it was well that he should know of his affliction, for he would then remember him in his prayers. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God." Let us remember those who are one with us in Christ and especially let us bear on our hearts all those who are afflicted in mind, body, or estate. If we have had to leave Trophimus at Miletum, or at Brighton, or at Ventnor, let us leave our heart's love with him. And if we hear that another Trophimus lies sick not far from our own home, let us accept the information as in itself a sufficient summons to minister to the afflicted friend. May holy sympathy pervade all our souls, for however active and zealous we may be, we have not yet reached a perfect character unless we are full of compassion,

tender-hearted, and considerate of the sorrowful, for this is the mind of Christ.

Simple as the statement of our text certainly is, it is found in an inspired book and it is, therefore, more than an ordinary note in a common letter. Like another verse of the same chapter, "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when you come, bring with you and the books, but especially the parchments," has been judged to be beneath the dignity of inspiration, but we think not so. The God who counts the hairs of our heads in providence may well mention His sick servant on the pages of inspiration. Instead of quibbling at the littleness of the recorded fact, let us admire "the love of the Spirit" who, while He lifts Ezekiel and Daniel above the spheres and raises the language of David and Isaiah to the utmost pitch of poetry and eloquence, yet deigns to breathe in such a line as this—*"Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick."* Can we learn anything more from this plain line of apostolic penmanship? Let us see. If the same divine Spirit who inspired it will shine upon it, we shall not read it in vain.

I. From the fact that Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletum we learn that IT IS THE WILL OF GOD THAT SOME GOOD MEN SHOULD BE IN ILL HEALTH. Whatever the malady may have been which affected Trophimus, Paul could certainly have healed him if the divine Spirit had permitted the use of his miraculous powers to that end. He had raised up Eutychus from death and he had given back the use of his limbs to the cripple at Lystra. We feel, therefore, fully assured that had God allowed the apostle so to use his healing energy, Trophimus would have left his bed and continued his journey to Rome. Not so, however, had the Lord willed. The good fruit-bearing vine must be pruned and Trophimus must suffer—there were ends to be answered by his weakness which could not be compassed by his health. Instantaneous restoration could have been given, but it was withheld under divine direction.

This doctrine *leads us away from the vain idea of chance.* We are not wounded by arrows shot at a venture, but we smart by the determinate counsel of heaven. An overruling hand is everywhere present, preventing or permitting ill and no one shaft of disease is ever let fly by stealth from the bow of death. If someone must be ill, it was a wise providence which selected Trophimus, for it was better for him to be ill than Titus, or Tychicus, or Timothy. It was well, too, that he happened to be ill at Miletum near to his own native city Ephesus. We cannot always see the hand of God in providence, but we may always be sure that it is there. If not a sparrow lights on the ground without our Father, surely not a child of the divine family is laid low without His sacred will. Chance is a heathen-

ish idea which cannot live in the presence of an everywhere present, living, and working God. Away with it from every Christian mind! It is alike dishonoring to the Lord and grievous to ourselves.

This also delivers us from regarding affliction as being always brought upon men by their personal sin. Many a sickness has been the direct result of intemperance or some other form of wickedness—but here is a worthy, well-approved brother laid aside and left on the road through a malady for which he is not blamed in any measure. It is too common nowadays for men to be of a hard and cruel spirit and ascribe the illnesses even of those who are true children of God to some fault in their habits of life. We wonder how they would like to be dealt with in this manner if they were suffering and could wash their hands in innocence in reference to their daily lives? In our Lord's Day they told Him, "Lord, he whom You love is sick." And Solomon, long before that time wrote, "Whom the Lord loves He corrects; even as a father the son in whom he delights." This was a much better, more humane, and more truthful speech than the frozen philosophy of modern times which traces each man's sickness to his own violation of natural law and instead of pouring in the balm of consolation, pours out the sulfuric acid of slanderous insinuation. Let the afflicted examine himself to see if the rod is not sent to correct some secret evil and let him diligently consider where he may amend—but far be it from us to stand at his bedside like judges or lictors and look upon our friend as an offender as well as a sufferer. Such brutality may be left to the philosophers, but it would ill become the sons of God. We may not think a shade the less of Trophimus because he is sick at Miletum. He is probably a far better man than any of us and perhaps for that very reason he is more tried. There is gold in him which pays for putting into the crucible—he bears such rich fruit that he is worth pruning—he is a diamond of so pure water that he will repay the lapidary's toil. This may not be quite so true of any of us and therefore we escape his sharper trials. Let us, as James says, "Count them happy that endure," and like David say, "Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord, and teach him out of Your law." What do the Scriptures say?—"For whom the Lord loves, He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not?" Lazarus of Bethany, Dorcas, Epaphroditus, and Trophimus are a few of that great host of sick folk whom the Lord loves in their sicknesses, for whom the promise was written, "The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: You will make all his bed in his sickness."

II. We have only strength and space for mere hints and so we notice, secondly, that GOOD MEN MAY BE LAID ASIDE WHEN THEY SEEM TO BE MOST NEEDED—as Trophimus was when the aged apostle had but a scanty escort and required his aid. Paul needed him badly enough soon after he had been obliged to leave him at Miletum, for he writes sorrowfully, "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me." "And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus." How glad he would have been with Trophimus, for we see how he begs Timothy to come with all speed and to bring Mark, whose service he greatly needed with him. Yet not even for Paul's sake can Trophimus be suddenly raised up. His Lord sees it to be necessary that he should feel the heat of the furnace and into the crucible he must go. We think that the church cannot spare the earnest minister, the indefatigable missionary, the faithful deacon, the tender teacher—but God thinks not so. No one is indispensable in the household of God. He can do His own work not only without Trophimus, but even without Paul. Yes, we go further—it sometimes happens that the work of the Lord is quickened by the decease of one upon whom it seemed to depend. When a broad, far-spreading tree is cut down, many smaller trees which were dwarfed and stunted while it stood, suddenly shoot up into vigorous growth—even so, one good man may do much and yet, when he is removed, others may do more. Temporary illnesses of great workers may call to the front those who would otherwise, from modesty, have remained in the rear—and the result may be a great gain.

Poor Trophimus had, in his healthier days, been the innocent cause of bringing Paul into a world of trouble, for we read in Acts 21:27 that a tumult was made by the Jews because they imagined that Paul had brought Trophimus into the temple and so had defiled it. Now, when he could have been of service, he is sick and no doubt it was a great grief to him that it should be so. Yet for him, as oftentimes for us, there was no alternative but to submit himself under the hand of God and feel that the Lord is always right. Why do we not yield at once? Why do we chomp the bit and paw the ground, restless to be on the road? If our Lord bids us stand still, can we not be quiet? Active spirits are apt to become restive spirits when under the restraining hand—energy soon sours into rebellion and we quarrel with God because we are not allowed to glorify Him in our own way—a foolish form of contest which at bottom means that we have a will of our own and will only serve God upon condition of having it indulged. Brethren, he who writes these lines knows what he writes and this is the verdict of his experience—God's work needs us far less

than we imagine and God would have us aware of this fact, for He will not give His glory to human instruments any more than He will allow His praise to be bestowed on graven images.

III. Our text clearly shows us that GOOD MEN WOULD HAVE THE LORD'S WORK GO ON WHATEVER BECOMES OF THEM.

Paul did not desert Trophimus, but left him, because a higher call summoned him to Rome. Trophimus, we may be sure, did not wish to delay the great apostle, but was content to be left. No doubt they both felt the separation, but like true soldiers of Christ, they endured hardness and for the sake of the cause, parted company for a while.

It would be a great grief to a true-hearted worker if he knew that any fellow-laborer slackened his pace for his sake. The sick in an army of an earthly monarch are necessarily an impediment, but it need not be so in the army of the King of kings. Spiritual sickness is a sore hindrance, but sickness of body should not delay the host. If we cannot preach, we can pray. If one work is out of our reach, we can try another and if we can do nothing, our inability should serve as a call to the vigorous to be doing all the more. Trophimus is sick, then let Timothy be the more energetic. Trophimus cannot attend the apostle, then let Timothy be the more diligent to come before winter. Thus, by acting as an incentive, the lack of one man's service may produce tenfold more in others who are awakened to extra exertions.

Brethren, it will be the sweetest alleviation to the pains of a sick pastor if he sees you each and all nerved to special diligence. His enforced rest will be the better enjoyed if he knows that the Church of God is not a sufferer because of it. And his whole mind and spirit will minister to the health of his body if he sees the fruit of the Spirit of God in all of you, keeping you faithful and zealous. Will you not see to this for Jesus' sake?

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THE RIDER ON THE WHITE HORSE AND THE ARMIES WITH HIM
NO. 1452B

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

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He does judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."
Revelation 19:11-16.

THE beloved John was, above all other men, familiar with the humble Savior. He had leaned his head upon His bosom and knew better than any other of the apostles the painful beatings of His Lord's sorrowful heart. Never from his mind could be effaced the likeness of Christ, the visage more marred than that of any man. He had seen the dear sufferer on that dreadful night when He was covered with gory sweat in Gethsemane. He had seen Him after He had been buffeted and scourged in Herod's palace and Pilate's hall. He had even stood at the foot of the cross and seen his divine Master in the extreme agonies of death, and therefore, the tender, affectionate heart of John would never permit his Master's suffering image to fade from his memory. Truly, if he had spoken to us in vision—in symbolic terms—concerning what he had seen of his Lord and Master here below, he would have described Him as a footman going forth alone to the fight with no armies following Him, for all His disciples forsook Him and fled, Himself wearing no glittering armor, but with His garments dipped in blood and with His face smeared with shame. He would have told us how the solitary Champion fought alone amid the dust and smoke of the battle and how He fell and bit the dust, so that His foe set his foot upon Him and for a moment rejoiced over Him. He would have told us how He leaped again from the grave and trod

down His adversaries and led captivity captive. Such would have been, only in far nobler terms, John's description of his first sight of his wrestling warrior Lord.

But now, in the passage before us a door was opened in heaven and the disciple whom Jesus loved saw what else he had never seen—what else he had never imagined. He saw the same warrior Lord, but after quite another fashion. If John had continued to look with the eyes of sense at Christ and His followers even to this day and had viewed the battle as it is to be seen in history upon earth, he would have said that he saw the same despised and rejected One at the head of a band of equally despised and rejected, leading them to prison and to death. He would have told you how to this very day the banner of the gospel is borne aloft amid smoke and dust and Christ crucified is proclaimed amid contention and ridicule. He would have drawn in black colors the scene of the battle, the great battle which is raging among the sons of men at this very hour. But now a door was opened in heaven and John saw the scene *as God sees it.* He looked upon it from heaven's point of view and saw the conflict between good and evil, between Christ and Satan, between truth and error. He saw it in heaven's own clear view and he then wrote the vision that we also might see it. Oh, if we are sharers in this conflict; if we are following the Lamb wherever He goes; if we are pledged to the truth and to the right; if we are sworn to the precious blood of atonement and to the grand doctrines of the gospel, it will do us good and stir our blood to stand on one of the serene hilltops of heaven, above the mists of earth and look upon the battle which rages still upon the earth and will rage on till Armageddon shall conclude the war. If we can behold the scene, God strengthening our eyes, it may strengthen our hands for the conflict, our hearts for the fray.

When the door was opened in heaven, the first thing that the seer of Patmos noticed was *our Captain.* Let us look at Him, first. Afterwards he saw *His followers,* and then he marked *the mode of warfare and caught a glimpse of the great defeat of the foe.*

I. First, then, JOHN SAW OUR CAPTAIN, the King of kings.

Let us notice His glorious state. He says, "I saw and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him." While Jesus was here, as we have already said, He was a foot soldier. He had to plunge knee-deep through mire and dirt and walk as wearily as any of the rest of the warrior company. But now that He has ascended, though He continues to fight, it is in another fashion. Of course the terms are symbolical and none will take them literally, but our Lord is here described as sitting upon a gallant steed, charging His foes upon a snow-white horse. This means that

Christ is *honored* now. He is no weary, dusty, fainting foot soldier now, I guarantee you. Time was when Solomon said that he saw servants upon horses and princes walking in the dust—and so it was with Christ—Pilate and Herod rode the high horse and Jesus walked in pain and dishonor. But now, like a greater Mordecai, He rides on the King's horse, for this is the man whom the King delights to honor. In royal state our Jesus goes forth to war, not as a common soldier, but as a glorious prince royally mounted.

By a horse is denoted not only honor, but *power*. To the Jews the employment of the horse in warfare was unusual, so that when it was used by their adversaries they imputed to it great force. Jesus Christ has a mighty power today—a power which none can measure. He was crucified in weakness, but where is the weakness now? He gave His hands to the nails and His feet to be fastened to the wood but He does so no longer. Now He has mounted on the horse of His exceeding great power and He rules in heaven and in earth and none can stay His hand, or put Him to dishonor, or dispute His will. O you that love Him, feast your eyes upon Him this day. It is not for me to speak—to do so were but to hold a candle to the sun—but gaze upon Him for yourselves and let your eyes be satiated with the image, as you see Him, once despised and rejected, now taking to Himself His great power.

Here is symbolized *swiftness*, too. Christ had to walk when He was here and go from city to city, scarcely getting through them all till His time was accomplished. But now His word runs very swiftly. He has but to will it and the voice of His gospel is heard to the utmost ends of the earth. Their line is gone out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. Everywhere is the gospel preached, if it is but for a testimony against them, and today is fulfilled before your eyes the words of the prophet Zechariah, "The Lord of hosts has visited His flock, the house of Judah, and has made them as His goodly horse in the battle, and they shall fight because the Lord is with them."

The color of the horse is meant to denote *victory*. The Roman conqueror, when he enjoyed a triumph on returning from a campaign, rode up the Via Sacra on a white horse and the Romans crowded to the housetops to gaze upon the hero as he exhibited his spoils. Now Jesus Christ is admired of angels and elect spirits who throng the windows of heaven to gaze upon Him who is glorified by His Father. There is a pale horse and his name that sits on him is Death, and there is a horse red with blood, and yet another black with judgment. But His is a white horse significant of comfort and of joy to all that know and love Him. He comes to fight, but the fight is for peace. He comes to destroy, but it is to de-

stroy His people's enemies. He comes as a conqueror, but it is as a delivering conqueror who scatters flowers and roses where He rides, breaking only the oppressor, but blessing the citizens whom He emancipates.

Again, I say, I scarcely like to speak upon this theme—it seems too great for me—but I would bid the saints of God who have wept at Gethsemane now lift up their eyes and smile as they see that same Redeemer who once lay groveling beneath the olive trees now riding on the white horse. Your Lord at this moment is no more despised, but all the glory that heaven itself can devise is lavished upon Him.

John looked into the open vault of heaven and he had time not only to see the horse, but to mark the character of Him that sat upon it. He says that He that sat upon him was *called Faithful and True*. By this you may know your Lord. He has been a faithful and true Friend to you. O soldiers of the cross, when has He ever deceived you? When has He failed you or forgotten you? Faithful? Ah, that He is, faithful to every word that He has spoken. And true? Do you not recognize Him, for is He not the truth—the very truth of God? Has He not kept every promise that He has made you and have you not found His teachings to be everlastingly settled upon divine truthfulness? And faithful and true has He been to the great Father. The work He undertook to do He has accomplished. He has in nothing drawn back from the covenant engagements under which He laid Himself of old. He stood as the surety of His people and He has been faithful and true to that smarting suretyship. He came to be the deliverer of His elect and He has worked the deliverance. He has not turned either to the right hand or to the left, but He has been faithful and true to every pledge which He gave to His Father for the deliverance of His chosen. Yes, and even His enemies, though they give Him many a black word, cannot say that He is not faithful and true. He has not played false, even to the basest devil in hell, nor has He deceived in any respect the basest man that lives. Nor will He, for when the day comes to keep His word of terror, He will make the penalty tally to every syllable of the threat and mete out vengeance with a line and judgment with a plummet—and even His adversaries, though they shall forever rue the fact—shall confess that His name is Faithful and True. They called Him many ill names when He was here. They said He had a devil and was mad, but now it is acknowledged that His name is Faithful and True. We acknowledge it with intense delight and are glad to think that He leads the troops of heaven to the fight.

John still looked and as he gazed with opened eye, he marked *the mode of action and of warfare* which the Champion employed, for he says, "In righteousness He does judge and make war." Jesus is the only

king who always wars in this fashion. There have been brilliant exceptions to the general rule, but war is usually as deceitful as it is bloody and the words of diplomatists are a mass of lies. It seems impossible that men should deliberate about peace and war without straightway forgetting the meaning of words and the bonds of honesty. War still seems to be a piece of business in which truth and righteousness would be out of place; it is a matter so accursed that falsehood is most at home there. But as for our King, it is in righteousness that He does judge and make war. Christ's kingdom needs no deception—the plainest speech and the clearest truth—these are the weapons of our warfare. The Jesuitical craft which speaks not what it means; the priestcraft which undermines the faith of men in God to teach them faith in their fellow men; the falsehood which does not teach a doctrine at the first but gradually insinuates it into feeble minds; the craft which creeps into houses and leads astray silly women who are in bondage to their lusts—this has nothing to do with the kingdom of Christ. "In righteousness does He judge and make war." He bids His champions come forth with nothing but His word and speak that word faithfully as they receive it, whether men will hear or whether they will not. He tells His people, wherever they are, to live righteously, soberly, and in all integrity. And He Himself shakes off, as a man shakes off a viper from His hand, anything that is unrighteous, everything that is contrary to truth and holiness. This is our Champion and I guarantee you are right glad that He sits on the white horse and has the upper hand. Since He fights after this fashion, the more of such warfare the better for mankind.

John gazing still into the open door saw a little—not much—of the person of His blessed Master. And of course, he looked first into *those eyes,* those dear eyes which had so often been filled with tears and that at the last were even red with weeping. John gazed into them, or wished to do so, but he had to cover his own eyes, for they were dazzled. He says, "His eyes were as a flame of fire." Think of your Master on the white horse with such eyes as these tonight. Why are they like flames of fire? Why, first, to discern the secrets of all hearts. There are no secrets here that Christ does not see. There is no lewd thought; there is no unbelieving skepticism that Christ does not read. There is no hypocrisy, no formalism, no deceit that He does not scan as easily as a man reads a page in a book. His eyes are like a flame of fire to read us through and through and know us to our inmost soul. Oh, think of this and if you have any deceit, tremble before Him in whose spirit there is no guile. Those eyes, like a flame of fire, belong to our Champion that He may understand all the plots and crafts of all our foes. We are sometimes

alarmed—we say that the machinations of Rome are very deep and that the plots of infidelity dive very low. But what does it matter? *His* eyes are like a flame of fire—He knows what they are doing. He will confound their politics; He will expose their dishonest tricks and still lead on His host conquering and to conquer. Let us never fear while He is on the white horse with such eyes as His.

It was natural that John should carry his glance from the eyes to *the brow* and as he looked at our Champion on the white horse he saw that on His head were many crowns. The last he had seen there was a crown of thorns—but that was gone and in the place of the one crown of the thorns of the earth he saw many crowns of the jewels of heaven. There rests the crown of creation, for this Word made heaven and earth. There is the crown of providence, for this Man now rules the nations with a rod of iron. There is the crown of grace, for it is from His royal hand that blessings are bestowed. There is the crown of the church, for be it known to all men that there is no Head of the church but Christ, and woe unto those who steal the title. He is head over all things to His church and King in the midst of her. Yes, on His head are many crowns, placed there by individual souls that He has saved. We have each one tried to crown Him in our poor way and we will do so as long as we live. All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth and therefore well may multitudes of diadems decorate that august brow which once was belted with thorns. Glory be unto You, O Son of God! Our hearts adore You tonight as we contemplate You on Your white horse.

Still looking at Him, John saw one thing more, namely, *His vesture*. He says that His vesture was dipped in blood. Oh, but this is the grandest thought about our Master, wherever He may be, that He is always a real man wearing the bloody garment. As the atoning sacrifice, He is at His best. We love Him as we see the white lily of His perfect nature, but the rose of Sharon is the flower for us, for its sweet perfume breathes life to our fainting souls. Yes, He bled and this is the greatest thing we can say of Him. His life was glorious, but His death transcends it. A living Christ, a reigning Christ—we are charmed as we think of this—but oh, the bleeding Christ, the bleeding Christ for me. As the blood is the life, so is His blood life to us—the life of the gospel, the life of our hopes—and one delights to think of Him that, though He rides the white horse, He has never stripped off the bloody shirt in which He won our redemption. He looks like a Lamb that has been slain and still wears His priesthood. Whenever He goes out to conquer, it is with this harness on, this vesture dipped in blood. Oh, preach Him, you His servants. Preach Him in His blood-red vesture. You shall never see souls saved if you portray Him in

any other kind of coat. You take His own garment from Him and put on that of another—and you pretend that you are making Him more illustrious as you put on Him a scarlet robe. But His own blood is His beauty and His triumph. Let Him come before us in that and our hearts shall crown Him with loudest acclaim.

One other thing John saw and that was *His name*. But here he seems to contradict himself. He says that He had a name which no man knows, yet he says that His name was the Word of God. Oh, but it is all true, for in such a One as our Master there must be paradoxes. No man knows His name. None of you know all His nature. His love passes your knowledge. His goodness, His majesty, His humiliation, His glory—all these transcend your mind. You cannot know Him. Oh, the depths! If you plunge deepest into the mystery of the incarnate God you can never reach the bottom of it. "No man knows the Son but the Father." And yet you do know His name, for you know that He is "the Word of God." And what does that mean? Why, when a man would show himself, he speaks. "Speak," said the philosopher, "that I may see you." A man's speech is the embodiment of his thought. You know his thought when you hear his word, if he is a truth-speaking man. Now, Christ is God's Word. That is His heart, spoken out to you. His inmost thoughts of love are printed in great capital letters and set before you in the living, loving, bleeding, dying person of the incarnate Son of God. Thus is He called the Word of God and in that capacity it becomes us to delight ourselves exceedingly in Him and to exalt because He is now riding triumphantly upon His white horse.

II. Thus have I bid you gaze at what John saw. Time chides me, however, and I can only ask you next, if you have seen the brightest One of all upon the white horse, just to look at HIS FOLLOWERS. "The armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses.

See then that *Christ has a great following*—not one army, but "armies"—whole hosts of them—numbers that cannot be counted. My Lord is not the chief of a small band, but He has a great host. There are some who think that all Christ's followers go to their little Bethel and so they all sit down on the top of their own Mount Zion and sweetly bless the Lord who shuts out the rest of mankind. But I tell you, your little Bethel would not make a stable for the horses of His lieutenants. He has great armies following Him, for a countless number out of every people and nation and tongue has He redeemed with His most precious blood.

And these that follow Him, you notice, are *all mounted*. They followed Him on white horses. They are mounted on the same sort of horses as Himself, for they fare as He fares. When He walks, they must walk. When

He bears a cross, they must carry crosses, too. But if ever He gets a crown, He cries, "They shall be crowned, too." If ever He gets on horseback, He will have His saints on horseback with Him, for it is not like He that He should ride and they should walk. Remember Alexander and how he kept up the spirit of his soldiers? Whenever the troops were thirsty, Alexander would not drink. And when they marched on foot, Alexander footed it with them. So is it with our Master—He has been marching here in the rough ways with us and He will let us ride in the glory ways with Him when the time shall come.

The armies of Christ followed Him on white horses. Look steadily at these white horses, for I want you to observe the armor of their riders. Cromwell's men wore at their sides long iron scabbards in which they carried swords which oftentimes they wiped across the manes of their horses when they were red with blood. A dreadful story that is to read, brave as were those Ironsides. But if you look at these troops there is not a sword among them. Not a scabbard dangles. Not a piece of metal flashes back the sunlight. Neither helmet nor breastplate is there, nor does there seem to be a pistol at the holster. They are not armed with lance or pike and yet they are riding forth to war. Do you want to know the armor of that war? I will tell you. They are clothed in white linen—white and clean. Strange battle array is this! And yet this is how they conquer and how you must conquer, too. This is both armor and weapon. Holiness is our sword and our shield. This is pike and gun. If we but live as Christ lives and follow Him, we shall conquer, for no sword can come at him that lives to God—since should it slay his body, it cannot touch his soul, he lives and conquers still. Think of this and never ask for any other weapon but this in the day of battle.

Yet I have said they were all on horses which shows you that the saints of God have a strength that they sometimes forget. You know not that you ride on a horse, O child of God, but there is a supreme invisible power which helps you in contending for Christ and for His truth. You are mightier than you know and you are riding more swiftly to the battle and more rapidly over the heads of your foes than you ever dreamed. When a door shall be opened in heaven to you and you get to the battle's end, you will say, "Bless the Lord, I, too, rode on a white horse. I, too, conquered when I thought I was defeated. I, too, by simple obedience to His will and keeping the faith and walking in His truth, have been more than conqueror through Him that loved me."

And is not this a grand sight, this man—this "bonny man," as Rutherford calls Him—on His white horse and all these bright ones following after Him in all their glorious array.

III. And now we must close, for the bell has tolled just now to show that the hour is up, but we cannot end till we have spoken of THE WARFARE. What is this warfare? There cannot be war without a sword, yet if you look all along the ranks of the white-robed armies there is not a sword among them. Who carries the sword? There is one who bears it for them all. It is He, the King, who comes to marshal us. He bears a sword. But where? It is in His mouth. Strange place! A sword in His mouth. Yet this is the only sword my Lord and Master wields. Mohammed subdued men with the scimitar, but Christ subdues men with the gospel. We have but to tell out the glad tidings of the love of God, for this is the sword of Christ with which He smites the nations. Be His mouths, my brethren. Be His mouths, my sisters. Tell to your children in your Sunday school classes. Tell the poor in the corners of the streets. Tell by your little printed pamphlets if you cannot by your voices, all the story of how He loved us and gave Himself for us—for this is the sword of our warfare—it goes forth from the mouth of Christ. Let us be content to fight with this and nothing else.

But for those who will not yield to it, our Leader has a hand as well as a tongue and He says that He will rule the nations with a rod of iron. And if you will read history through, you will find that all nations that reject the gospel have to suffer for it. I select one instance. The gospel came to Spain years ago and multitudes of the nobility were converted. But they had their public executions and burnt the saints and the accursed Inquisition stamped out the gospel in Spain. And to this day the nation cannot rise. It will, I trust, by God's forgiving mercy, but for centuries she that ruled the nations and covered the deep with her armadas has been sitting groveling in her poverty and sloth, for Christ has ruled her with a rod of iron and so will He rule all nations that reject the testimony of His mouth. If the sword of His mouth is not heeded, then comes the last of this dread warfare—and may God grant that we may never know it—when His foot shall do it, for He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. Ah, what a crush must that be which will come upon the clusters of Gomorrah from the foot which once was nailed to the tree. Who stomped that sinner's soul and crushed it down? Was he an angry angel with a sword of fire? No, it was the Christ of God, the man of love rejected and despised. Fiercer than a lion on prey is love when once provoked. When love turns to jealousy, its fires are like coals of juniper which have a violent flame. Beware, you despisers, lest you continue to despise. Submit to the sword of His mouth, lest you be destroyed by His hands. Be wise, when once His hands begin to smite, lest you have to feel His foot, for it is all over then.

May you and I each have a white horse with which to follow Christ. But we never shall unless we are His followers *here*. We must put on the snow-white garments now. Here they are, ready for you—the righteousness of Christ will be given to any man who accepts Him and believes on Him. And when your snow-white garments are once on, He will give you the horse of His sacred strength and you, even you, following in the tracks of your gallant leader, shall ride on, shouting, "Victory, victory, victory, through the blood of the Lamb." The Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
REVELATION 18:21-24; 19.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—45, 324, 851.

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ETERNAL FAITHFULNESS UNAFFECTED BY HUMAN UNBELIEF
NO. 1453

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

"If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself."
2 Timothy 2:13.

THIS is one of the five faithful sayings which the apostle mentions. All those faithful sayings are weighty and important. I suppose that they may have come into the possession of the church by having been uttered by some of those prophets who were raised up to cherish the infancy of the church, such as Agabus and the daughters of Philip and others. These may have been some of their more remarkable sayings which laid hold upon the minds of good men; were quoted by the preachers and teachers and so became current throughout the church. Such golden sayings were minted into proverbs and passed from hand to hand, enriching all who received them. To the saints they became "familiar in their mouths as household words" and were specially named faithful or true sayings. No doubt the apostle Paul gave his endorsement to many of these holy proverbs, but five of them he has encased in the amber of inspiration and handed down for our special note. Perhaps it may interest you to notice them as they occur. The first one, probably the best *one,* is in the First Epistle of Timothy, first chapter and the 15th verse, *"This* is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." I can suppose that the good news was frequently conveyed by humble-minded Christians to the outside world in that short and compact form—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save *sinners,"* so that it was commonly known to be a saying among Christians. It was the way in which those who could not preach a sermon and perhaps could scarcely compose a sentence for themselves, learned the pith and marrow of the gospel and had it in a concise and simple form for instructing others. Converts were in the habit of telling this to their heathen friends and acquaintances wherever they went, that they might know what Jesus Christ had come to do and might be led to believe on His name. The next faithful or true saying is in the First Epistle of Timothy, the third chapter and the first verse. "This is a true saying, if a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work." Any man who desires to oversee the church of God and to be in the midst of the people as a shepherd, desires a good work. He will bring himself great anxiety, labor, and travail, but the work is honorable and has so large a spiritual reward that a man is wise to choose it and to give his whole life to it. Another of these faithful sayings will be found in the First Epistle of Timothy, the fourth chapter and the eighth verse, for so the words run, "For bodily exercise profits little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is

to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation. For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe." Godliness has the profit of this life and the next and therefore godly men are content to suffer, because they expect and receive an abundant blessing as the result thereof at the hand of God. Such a proverb as this was greatly needed in persecuting times and it is still valuable in these greedy days when men find godliness a hindrance to their hasty snatching at wealth and therefore turn aside unto ways of dishonesty and falsehood. The next is the one which constitutes our text. We will not, therefore, read it again till we come to handle it. But the fifth is in Titus, the third chapter and the eighth verse—*"This* is a faithful saying, and these things I will that you affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." That those who believe in Jesus should manifest the holy character of their faith by their lives is another one of these faithful sayings which comes with all the greater force from Paul because he above all men was free from any suspicion of legality or the putting of human merit into the place of the grace of God which is received by faith.

And now, coming to the faithful saying before us, it may not strike you at first, but scholarly men have observed that the 11th, 12th, and 13th verses assume the form of a hymn. The Hebrew hymns were written in parallelisms, not, of course, in rhymes and these three verses are thought to have been one of the oldest of Christian hymns—

"It is a faithful saying:
For if we are dead with Him,
We shall also live with Him:
If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him:
If we deny Him, He also will deny us:
If we believe not, yet He abides faithful:
He cannot deny Himself."

This is a miniature psalm—one of those psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with which the saints of God were known to edify one another.

I am sure this last part of this brief hymn is well worthy to be regarded as a faithful saying among ourselves. Brethren, we may often mention it. We may frequently quote it. We may roll it under our tongue as a sweet morsel. We may pass it from one to another as a classic saying of Christian wisdom—"If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself."

In handling it at this time, I would divide it into two folded parts. The first double portion is *the sad possibility, with the consoling assurance.* "If we believe not"—sad possibility, "yet He abides faithful"—consoling assurance. The second part of our subject *is the glorious impossibility and the sweet inference that we may draw from it.* The glorious impossibility is—"He cannot deny Himself" and the inference we draw from it is the obverse or converse of our text—If we believe, He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.

I. To begin, then, with THE SAD POSSIBILITY AND THE CONSOLING ASSURANCE—If we believe not, yet He abides faithful."

I must take the *sad possibility* first—"If we believe not," and I shall read this expression as though, first of all, it concerned *the world in gen-*

eral, for I think it may so be fairly read. If we believe not—if mankind believes not, if the race believes not, if the various classes of men believe not—yet He abides faithful. *The rulers* believe not and there are some that make this a very great point. They said concerning Jesus, "Have any of the rulers believed on Him?" If Lord So-and-So hears the preacher, there must be something in what he says. Englishmen are wonderfully impressed with the judgment of a duke or an earl and even with that of titled folk of lower degree. If any of the rulers believe in Him, who among worshippers of rank would raise a question? Is it published under authority? Do the great ones subscribe to it? "Oh, then," says one, "it must be good and it must be true." Now, I venture to say that all history proves that the truth has very seldom been accepted by the rulers of this world and for the most part, the poorest of the poor have been more able to perceive the truth than the greatest of the great have ever been. There would have been no Christianity in the world at the present moment if it had not found a shelter in workshops and in cottages. It has flourished among the despised poor when it has been condemned by the great ones of the earth. Well, sirs, if we believe not—that is, if our greatest men, if our senators and magistrates, princes and potentates, believe not—it does not affect the truth of God in the smallest conceivable degree—"yet He abides faithful."

Many, however, think it more important to know on which side *the leaders of thought* are enlisted and there are certain persons who are not elected to that particular office by popular vote, who, nevertheless, take it upon themselves to consider that they are dictators in the republic of opinion. They are advanced men and far ahead of the old school of divines. Some of us think that they are advancing in the direction of going backwards and that they are putting ignorant guess-work into the room of proved doctrine and solid, experimental, scriptural teaching. Still, as in their own opinion they are our superiors and pioneer the way of progress, we will for a moment think of them as such. Now, in our Lord's Day the advanced thinkers were not on His side at all—they were all against Him—and after He had departed, the greatest peril of the church of God arose from the advanced thought of the period. The Gnostics and other Grecian thinkers came forward and threw their philosophical mud into the pure stream of the gospel till there was no plain statement which was not rendered mythical, mystical, confused, or clouded, so that only the initiated could possibly understand it. The gospel of Jesus Christ was meant to be the plainest truth that ever shone upon the sons of men. It was meant to be legible in its own light by the young, the unlearned, and the simple. But the advanced thinkers took the gospel and twisted it, colored it, adorned it, and bedaubed it till by the time it came through their various processes you would not have known it to be the same thing at all. And in fact, Paul said that it was *not* the same thing, for he called it "another gospel," and then he corrected himself and said it was not another—"But there are some," he said, "that trouble you." However, we need not care because of these wise men, for if they believe not, but becloud the gospel, yet God abides faithful. If over there in the groves where Socrates and Plato gathered disciples by their philosophy; if over there, I say, there should not be found a single philosopher who believes

in God, so much the worse for the philosophers. It does not affect the gospel or our faith in it—if they believe not, He abides faithful. If Paul at the Areopagus gets no sympathy except from two or three and in fact they have only asked him there to "*hear* what this babbler says" and though they all, as they go home, say that Paul is beside himself and mad—and a setter forth of strange gods—yet Paul is right and the Lord abides faithful.

Yes, and I venture to enlarge this thought a little more. If the rulers do not believe and if the philosophical minds do not believe—and if, in addition to this, *public opinion,* so called, rejects it—yet the gospel is still the same eternal truth. Public opinion is not the test and gauge of the truth, for public opinion has continually altered and it will continue to alter. The aggregate thinking of fallible men is less than nothing when set against the one solitary mind of God who is infallible, as He reveals it to us by the Holy Spirit in the words of truth in the Scriptures. But some think that the old gospel cannot be right because, you see, everybody says that it is out of date and wrong. That is one reason for being the more sure that it is right, for the world lies in the wicked one and its judgment is under his sway. What are multitudes when they are all under the influence of the father of lies? The greatest majority in the world is a minority of one when that man is on God's side. Count heads, do you? Well, count by the millions if you like, but I shall rather weigh than count—and if I speak the truth—I have more weight on my side than can be found in a million who believe not. I wish we all partook of the spirit of Athanasius when he said, defending the deity of his great Master, "I, Athanasius, against the world." You must learn to stand alone. When you know that you have a grip on revealed truth, you may not set all the judgments of men in comparison with the eternal and infallible judgment of the mighty God. No, though we believe not, that is, the mass of us and nations of us, "*yet He* abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself."

I want to ask your thoughtful attention to one consideration here. Have you not often heard it said that ministers ought to be abreast of the times; that theology should be always toned and varied so as to suit the advanced thought of the wonderful period in which we live? And as this is a time when infidelity appears to be in the very air, we are told that we ought to sympathize with it very earnestly and heartily, for it is a form of struggling for the light which we ought to encourage. Now, this is another sort of talk from what I hear from the apostle Paul. He has no sympathy with it. He put his foot on it. *"Let* God be true and every man a liar"—that is the style in which he speaks. As to going in to study the philosophies in order to tune the gospel to their note, he says, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." When he finds that this style of doctrine does not please the Jew and that it is a stumbling block to him and that it does not please the Greek, but makes him sneer and call it foolishness, does the apostle, therefore, say, "Come here, dear Jewish friend. I have a way of putting this which will show you that I do not quite mean what you thought I did. I used the word "cross" in a certain sense not at all objectionable to Judaism"? Does he gently whisper, *"Come* to me, my learned Greek friend, and I will show you that your philosophers and I mean the same thing"? Not a bit. No, he stands

fast and firm to Christ crucified and salvation by His blood, as, by God's grace, I trust we are resolved to do. Though we believe not—that is, though the whole world believe not—yet God's gospel is not to be altered to suit human whims and fancies, but in all its forms, in all its divine authority, unpaved, uncut, worked out as a whole, it is still to be proclaimed, for *"He* abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself."

Now, having spoken of our text as referring to the world in general, it is perhaps a more sorrowful business to look at it as referring to the visible church in particular. The apostle says, "Though *we* believe not," and surely he must mean *the visible church of God.*

And does the church of God ever fall into such a state that we may say of it, "It believes not"? Yes, the visible church has many and many a time fearfully turned aside. Go back for a type of it to the wilderness. The children of Israel were brought up out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm. They were fed in the wilderness with angels' food and made to drink of water from the rock—but they continually doubted their God—

"Now they believe His word
While rocks with rivers flow.
But soon with sin they grieve the Lord,
And judgments lay them low."

But what happened? Did God depart from His purpose to give the land that flowed with milk and honey to the seed of Abraham? Did He break up the covenant and grow weary of it? No—Abraham's seed inherited the land and they dwelt therein, every man under his own vine and fig tree. Though the visible people of God rejected Him full often, so that for their unbelief they died in the wilderness, yet He remained faithful—He did not, He could not, deny Himself. Well, now, it comes to pass, sometimes, according to this type, that the visible church of God apostatizes from the truth of God. The doctrines of grace, the truths of the gospel are obscured, beclouded, scarcely preached—preached with gaudy words or hid behind ceremonies and rites and all sorts of things. And what happens? Are the foundation truths removed? Is the eternal truthfulness reversed? Has God recalled His promises? Oh no. "He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself."

Alas, the church of God seems to lose sometimes her faith in prayer! Her pleading assemblies become scarce. Her prayer for men's conversion is scarcely raised. Few come together to supplicate the Lord and besiege the mercy seat. But what then? Does God change? Does He forsake His cause? Oh, no: *"He* abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself." At such times the church almost loses her faith in the Holy Spirit and looks upon preaching as perhaps a necessary evil to be borne with—not as the vehicle by which the Holy Spirit saves men. They have small confidence in God's word that, *"by* the foolishness of preaching" He will *"save* them that believe." They do not expect the kingdom of Christ to be predominant, but they say, *"Since* the fathers fell asleep what long ages have dragged along and what slow progress Christianity has made. It is a hopeless cause. Let us be content to let the heathen world alone." At such time, they lose all heart and all faith in God. Have we not seen large portions of the visible church of God decline into such a state as this till we have been ready to ask with our Master, *"When* the Son of man

comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" But what then, my brethren? Suppose we should live to see *everywhere* a degenerate church; suppose it should become like Laodicea, till the Lord should seem to spew the visible church out of His mouth because she has become neither hot nor cold? Suppose He should say of the professing church of today as He did of Shiloh of old—"Go now to Shiloh where My place was at the first and see if there is one stone left upon another that is not cast down"? He took the candlestick away from Rome and He may take that candlestick away from other churches, too. But would that prove that God was unfaithful or that He had denied Himself? No, beloved, no. His faithfulness would then be seen in the judgment with which He would visit an unfaithful church. Yes, and it is seen today. You shall see a church which does not believe in the simple gospel grow few and feeble. According as the churches cease to be evangelical, they are diminished and brought low. A church that neglects prayer becomes disunited, scattered, lethargic, all but dead. A church that has no faith in the Holy Spirit may carry on her ordinances, but it will be with barren formality and without power from on high—all of which proves the faithfulness of Him who said, *"If* you walk contrary to Me, I will walk contrary to you." If they cast away from them that which is their strength, it is but faithfulness on God's part that they should become weak. All the history of the church, if you read it, from the days of Christ till now, will go to show that He deals with His church in such a way as to make her see that He is faithful, whatever she may be. He will help her when she turns to Him. He will bless her when she trusts Him. He will crown her when she exalts Him. But He will bring her low and chasten her when she turns, in any measure, aside from the simplicity of her faith. Thus does He prove that He is still faithful.

Once more, my brethren, I will read the text in a somewhat narrower circle. "If we believe not"—that is to say, if *the choicest teachers,* preachers, and writers believe not, yet He abides faithful.

One of the most shocking trials to young Christians is the fall of an eminent teacher. I have known some that have been almost ready to give up their faith when someone who appeared to be very earnest and faithful has suddenly apostatized. Such things have happened in our memory, to our intense grief and I want, therefore, to put it very, very plainly. If it should come to pass that anyone whom you revere as having been blest to your soul—whom because you have received from him the word of life—if such a one upon whom you may perhaps have learned much, should in the future turn out not to be true and faithful and should not believe, do not follow his unbelief, for, "If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself." Peter denies his Master—do not follow Peter when he is doing that, for he will have to come back weeping and you will hear him preaching his Master again. Worse still, Judas sells his Master—do not follow Judas, for Judas will die a wretched death and his destruction shall be a warning to others to cling more closely to the King. You may see the man who stood like a cedar in Lebanon fall by one stroke of the devil's axe, but do not, therefore, think that the trees of the Lord, which are full of sap, will fall, too. He will keep His own, for He knows them that are His. Pin not your faith to any man's

sleeve. Let not your confidence rest on any arm of flesh, neither say, "I believe because of the testimony of such a one and I hold to the form of sound words because my minister has held it," for all such props may be pulled away and all of a sudden may fail you. Let me put this very, very plainly. If *we* believe not—if those that seem to be the choice teachers of the age, the most successful evangelists of the period—if those who seem to stand the highest in the esteem of God's people, should, in an evil hour, forsake the eternal truths and begin to preach to you some other gospel which is not the gospel of Jesus Christ, I beseech you follow us not, whoever we may be or whatever we may be. Suffer no teachers, however great they may be, to lead you to doubt, for God abides faithful. Keep to the revealed will and mind of God—for "He cannot deny Himself."

Here, then, is the fearful possibility and side by side with it rims *this most blessedly consoling assurance*—"He abides faithful." Jesus Christ *abides*—there are no shifts and changes in Him. He is a rock and not a quicksand. He is the Savior whether the rulers and the philosophers believe in Him or refuse Him; whether the church and her ministers are true to Him or desert Him. He is the same Savior, God-Man, sitting supreme upon the truth. "Why do the heathens rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed? He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Yet," says He, "have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion." They cannot affect the imperial throne of our immortal Lord. He is still "the blessed and only Potentate" and so He must be, let them say what they will.

And as Christ remains the same Savior, so we have the same gospel. They have improved upon it, they tell us! Well, well, I feel so satisfied with the gospel as I get it from Paul and the inspired apostles that I would rather not have this improved gospel if they will allow me to keep to the old original. But so it is, like babies pleased with new toys, they cry their "modern thought" and culture and advanced ideas. He that has once tasted the old wines does not desire the new, because he says, "The old is better." Our Savior and His gospel abide the same. The gospel of Paul, the gospel of Augustine, the gospel of Calvin, the gospel of Whitefield, the gospel of any succession of faithful men you like to mention suffices us. He abides faithful.

And as the gospel is the same, so does Christ remain faithful to His engagements to His Father. He has promised to keep those whom the Father gave Him and He will keep them even to the end. And when the sheep shall pass again under the hands of Him that counts them, He will say, "Of all whom You gave me I have lost none." "He abides faithful." To sinners all over the world He says that if they come to Him, He will not cast them out and He is faithful to that. He graciously promises that *"Whosoever* calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." And He will be faithful to that. He is also faithful to His saints. He has promised to preserve them to His eternal kingdom and glory and He will preserve them. He says, "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands"—and He has held them in His loving grasp and He will hold them even to the end. And all this, though all the unbelief in the world should rise against Him. He will

stand to every word He has spoken and carry out every promise He has declared, though all should distrust and deny. "Yes and amen in Christ Jesus" are all the promises, henceforth and forever—and we shall find it so.

II. And now we have but a little time to spend upon the second very important part of our text, which is A GLORIOUS IMPOSSIBILITY WITH A SWEET INFERENCE THAT MAY BE DRAWN FROM IT. "He cannot deny Himself."

Three things God cannot do. He cannot die. He cannot lie, and He cannot be deceived. These three impossibilities do not limit His power, but they magnify His majesty, for these would be infirmities and infirmity can have no place in the infinite and ever-blessed God.

Here is one of the things impossible with God—"He cannot deny Himself." What is meant by that? It is meant, first, that *the Lord Jesus Christ cannot change* as to His nature and character towards us, the sons of men, for if He were to change He could only change from one state to another—from a better to a worse or from a worse to a better. If from a better to a worse, that were to deny Himself indeed, by ceasing to be as good as He is by nature. And if from a worse to a better, that were to deny Himself by proving that He was not, before, so good as He might have been. In no one point can Jesus Christ be changed, for He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever." If in any point He changed, He would, in that point, deny Himself, but He cannot do this, for being God He changes not.

His word cannot alter. I want you to notice this, because His word is so conspicuously Himself. His name shall be called the Word of God. Yes, He is Himself the Logos, the eternal Word and that Word cannot change. "The grass withers, and the flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." O servant of the Lord, the assurance which Paul and Peter gave, you may give. That same word of mercy which those first messengers of heaven went forth to declare, you may declare, for it still stands the same. He cannot deny His word since that word is Himself and He cannot deny Himself.

He cannot, beloved friends, *withdraw the salvation which He has presented to the sons of men,* for that salvation is indeed Himself. Jesus is the salvation of Israel. If a sinner wants to know where salvation lies, we point him to the Christ of God. He is not only a Savior, but He is salvation itself. And His salvation cannot be changed, for if *it* were changed He would be Himself changed or denied and He cannot deny Himself. There is still the same pardon for the chief of sinners; still the same renewing for the hardest hearts; still the same generous response to those who have strayed most; still the same adoption into the family for aliens and foreigners. His salvation, as Peter preached it at Pentecost, is the salvation which we preach to sinners today. "He cannot deny Himself."

And then *the atonement is still the same,* for that, too, is Himself—He has by Himself purged our sins. He Himself is the sacrifice. Well did the poet say—

"Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood
Shall never lose its power."

Because it is *His* blood, it must be unchanged in efficacy. He cleanses away our sins by Himself. His blood is His life and He always lives, and since He always lives, He is "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." Blessed be His name, the atoning sacrifice has not, even in the smallest degree, lost its efficacy. It is just as mighty as when it washed the dying thief from the foulness of hell into the purity of heaven and carried him from the gallows to a throne. Oh, how blessed must its power be to have cleansed so foul a wretch and to have placed him with the Master Himself in paradise the same day. The atonement cannot change, for that would involve that Jesus had denied Himself.

And *the mercy seat,* the place of prayer, still remains, for if that were altered He would have denied Himself, for what was the mercy seat or propitiatory, but that golden lid upon the covenant ark? What was it but Christ Himself, who is our propitiatory, the true mercy seat? You may always pray, brethren, for if prayer were denied its efficacy, God would have denied Himself. This is His memorial, "The God that hears prayer," and if He does not hear prayer He has denied Himself and ceased to be what He was. Jehovah will never so deny Himself as to become like Baal, a deaf God—to imagine it would be blasphemy.

And here is another sweet thought—*Christ's love to His church and His purpose towards her cannot change,* because He cannot deny Himself and His church is Himself. I mean not that visible church of which I spoke just now, which is a mixed multitude, but I mean that invisible church, that spiritual people, that bride of Christ which no man sees, for she is prepared in darkness and curiously worked in the lowest parts of the earth—and her Lord Himself will never actually see her till she is perfected, even as Adam never saw Eve, but slept until the great God had finished His bride and presented her in all her matchless beauty to be His sister and spouse. The day comes when the Lord Jesus Christ shall thus receive His perfected bride—and meanwhile He cannot change towards her, but His espousals shall be confirmed. She was taken out of His side when He lay in deep sleep of death and she is fashioned to be like He, so that when in joy He shall behold her, His joy and her joy shall be full. No, He will never, never deny her, for He cannot deny Himself. His plan of love shall be carried out and all His thoughts of grace fulfilled.

Nor will any of *His offices towards His church* and people ever fail. The Prophet shall be Prophet forever—"He cannot deny Himself." The Priest shall be a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec and will never refuse to offer our prayers and praises and to cleanse our souls, for He cannot deny Himself. The King will never cease to reign, or doff His crown, or lay down His scepter, for He cannot deny Himself. The Shepherd will forever keep the flock. The Friend will eternally stick closer than a brother. The Husband will still love His spouse. All that He is in relation to His people shall continue and abide, for He abides faithful. "He cannot deny Himself."

Now, my last word is about *an inference.* The text says, "If we believe, not, yet He abides faithful." It runs on that supposition. Now, brethren, take the other supposition—suppose we do believe? Will He not be faithful in that case, too? And will it not be true that He cannot deny Himself? I will suppose that a sinner is, at this moment, saying, "I believe that

Christ can save me. I will go and ask Him, I will go and trust Him." Ah, He will not deny Himself by rejecting your cry. I tell you, if He were to shut you out, dear soul, whoever you may be, if you go to Him, He would deny Himself. He never did deny Himself yet. Whenever a sinner comes to Him, He becomes his Savior. Whenever He meets a sick soul, He acts as his physician. Now, I have heard of persons who have been physicians who were ill or weary and needed rest—an accident has happened and they have felt inclined to get out of the way, if they could, because they were very hard-worked and worn out. They have told their servant to say, "My master is not at home!" But my Master never denied Himself. He will never get out of the way of a sinner. If you go to Him, you will find Him at home and on the look-out for you. He will be happier to receive you than you will be to be received, for He "waits to be gracious." As Matthew sat at the receipt of custom, waiting for the people to pay their dues, so does Christ sit at the receipt of sinners waiting for them to mention their needs. He is watching for you. I tell you again that He cannot reject you—that would be to alter His whole character and "un-Christ" Himself. To spurn a coming sinner would un-Jesus Him and make Him to be somebody else and not Himself any longer. "He cannot deny Himself." Go and try Him. Go and try Him. I wish some trembling soul would, at this moment, go and cast himself upon Christ and then report to us the result. Come, poor quivering seekers, sing in your heart, unbelieving as you are, that hymn of ours—

"I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try.
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die."

Oh, but if you were to perish at His feet, you would be the first that ever did so out of all those who have ever come to Him. And that first man has never been seen yet. Go and try my Lord and see for yourselves.

Well now, you Christian people, I want you to come also. If you believe your Lord, He will be faithful to you. Suppose it is a time of trouble with you? He will be faithful to you—go and cast your burden upon Him. Suppose at this time you are much exercised with spiritual distress? Go to the Lord as you did at first, as poor, guilty, rebellious sinners—and cast yourself upon Him and you will find Him faithful. "He cannot deny Himself." If my Lord were not kind to me tonight when I go to Him with my burdens, I should think that I had knocked at the wrong door because the Lord has been so good and so faithful to me up to now that it would take my breath away if I found Him changed. Oh, how good, how exceedingly good is my Lord! Did not we sing just now—

"He by my side has always stood:
His loving-kindness, oh, how good!"?

I could sing that with all my heart and I hope many of you could earnestly join with me. You have a dear mother, or a fond wife, or a choice friend and none of them has ever spoken anything but kindness to you—if, therefore, in some dark hour you were to go to them and instead of showing sympathy, they gave you sharp words and you could evidently see that they did not love you, how surprised you would be! So should I be if I were to meet anything but love from my dear Lord after all these years of tenderness. There is no fear of it, for *"He* cannot deny Himself."

So I finish by saying that we shall find it so in connection with the things of His kingdom and the concerns of His truth. There is a great uproar just now about the God of providence and they call me, I know not by what names, for speaking the truth for my Master. Well, what comes of it? Shall we, therefore, be afraid? No. If we believe, we shall find Him faithful—He will not deny Himself. Is the good old cause really in danger from skepticism and superstition? Speaking after the manner of men, it may seem so, but it never really is so. Even if it were tottering, we must not put our hand upon the ark of the Lord to steady it. God's cause is always safe. I do not know whether we may live to see it, but as surely as the Lord lives the truth will be triumphant in England. They may tell us that Puritanism is thrust to the wall, but it will take the crown of the causeway yet. The old cause goes back a little to take a breath, but she will make such a leap in this land as shall utterly surprise the soothsayers, for the Lord will make the diviners mad and they that count the towers and say that Zion is utterly fallen shall not know where to hide their heads. The devil once flew all over Europe and said, "It is all mine. Here they are selling indulgences and the Pope and I are master of it all." But there was a poor monk who had not himself seen the light of God but for a short time, who nailed his theses on the door of a church and from that hour the light of Christ began to spread all over Europe. And do you think the Lord is short of Luthers? Do you imagine that He has no sword or spear left in His armory? I tell you, He has as many instruments within reach as there are stars in the sky. When the influence of the gospel appears to recede, it is like the tide when it is ebbing out. Steadily it goes back and if we did not know better, we should begin to think that the silver waves would all give place to mire and pebbles—yet when the hour comes, at the very minute—the waters pause and remain at one point awhile. Then up comes the first wave of the wash and another and another and another and another, rising, advancing, and conquering the shore till the set has come to her fullness again. So must it be and so shall it be with the ocean of truth. Only let us have faith and we shall see the gospel at the flood again and old England covered with it. Doubt what you like, brethren, but do not doubt divine truth or doubt God. Hold on to the side that is most disgraced and dishonored—that has the worst word from men—for Christ and His church usually have the bleak side of the hill. Be content to breast the stream with courage learned from your Redeemer and Lord, for the day comes when to have stood with the truth and with the Son of the Highest will be the grandest honor that a creature can have worn.

May that honor be ours, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 TIMOTHY 2. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWM HYMN BOOK"—192, 664, 196.

TO MY BELOVED CHURCH AND CONGREGATION:

DEAR FRIENDS—After a long and severe illness, I am now on my way to the South of France to seek rest and gather strength in a less trying climate. The church has requested me to take three months' furlough and as this corresponds with the serious counsel of physicians and judi-

cious friends, I shall probably accept the considerate advice. I have promised to correspond with you and with my sermon readers week by week, by a note appended to the sermon or by a short discourse such as I have written during the last two weeks. This, then, to commence with—I have reached Paris [Jan. 18, 1879] by easy stages and I am none the worse for the traveling, but all the better for the change. Snow is falling heavily and may detain us, but if not, we hope to be at Mentone next Wednesday.

It would have been a far greater pleasure to me to have been able to occupy my pulpit, but as this must not be, I am right glad to speak by the press. May the weekly sermon be used by the Lord in a greater degree, now that the preacher's voice ceases for a while to proclaim His gospel.

One great favor I have to ask of you all—will you unite in hearty prayer that there may be a great revival at the Tabernacle during my absence? You have united to celebrate the 25th year of my pastorate by noble testimonies which I have dedicated to the Lord's work. Now unite with even greater ardor in seeking a great, a surpassing, and a crowning spiritual blessing. The Lord's own word is, "Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse and prove Me now, herewith, if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that you shall not have room enough to receive it." You have fulfilled the precept, now inquire for the promise. The Lord has guaranteed heavenly blessing, a divine blessing, an overwhelming blessing—do not be content without it, or it will look as if you despised the promise of the Lord. We stand on vantage ground now. Let us plead with double persistence, saying, "I will not let You go unless You bless me." Then will the windows open and the divine hand pour out the benediction of His Spirit—and salvation shall come to multitudes through Christ Jesus our Lord.

My love be with you all.

Yours for Jesus' sake,

C. H. SPURGEON

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THE EMPTY SEAT
NO. 1454A

WRITTEN WHEN AWAY FROM HIS PEOPLE, *BY C. H. SPURGEON.*

"David's place was empty."
1 Samuel 20:27.

IT was quite right that David's place should be empty because Saul sought to slay him and he could not safely sit in the presence of an enemy who had twice before cast a javelin at him to "smite him even to the wall with it." Self-preservation is a law of Nature which we are bound to obey—no man should needlessly expose himself to sudden death. It were well if many a seat were empty for this reason, for there are places exceedingly dangerous to the soul from which men should rise and flee at once. Where Satan sits at the head of the table, no man should tarry. There is the seat of the scorner, of which the Psalmist spoke—God grant that those who have occupied it may leave it in trembling haste. There is the settle of the drunkard, the chair of the presumptuous and the bench of the sluggard from each of which it were wisdom to depart.

May the Grace of God make such a change in all who have frequented the gatherings of the frivolous and the assemblies of the wicked that they may never be found in them again, but may be missed by their old companions who shall ask, "Why did the son of Jesse come not, neither yesterday nor today?" The javelin of temptation may soon destroy character, prospects and life, itself, and he is guilty of the grossest folly who exposes himself to it by placing himself where the arch-enemy finds chosen opportunities to work his deadly will.

At this time I shall use David's empty place for quite another purpose and shall note, first, that in your assemblies at this time there are SEATS EMPTIED BY DEATH. Before I had left the shores of England for the space of two days I received the grievous intelligence that two out of the membership of my Church had been called Home in one day. Of a Sister, the wife of an earnest and well-beloved Deacon it must be said—her place is empty. And of a Brother who had been her friend and mine, the same expression must be employed. Our sympathies must now flow forth to a bereaved husband and also to a widow in whose hearts there are places sorrowfully emptied and in whose homes there will be an empty chair and an empty couch which will force from their eyes rivers of tears whenever they look upon them.

It is our firm hope and confident belief that in these cases the loss of the House of God below is the gain of the House of God above—they fill other and better places and even those who loved them best and miss them most would not wish to call them back again. Jesus wills that His own should be with Him where He is and we cannot deny that He has a right to have them. Do not their eyes behold the King in His beauty? Would we deprive them of the vision? May the thought of the bliss of the

departed yield solace to the surviving and may Divine consolations be richly given by the Holy Spirit in the hour of painful bereavement.

Our places will be empty soon and we shall be missed from our accustomed pews in the House of Prayer—let the seats which have been just vacated remind us of this and silently call to our remembrance the precept—"Be you also ready." Use well your places for hearing the Gospel, for gathering at the Communion Table and for meeting for prayer while yet the opportunities remain to you, for the time is short and an account will have to be rendered. Love well those who are spared to you and do them all the good you can, for their places will not hold them forever. Cheer the aged, console the desponding, help the poor, for they will soon be beyond your reach and when you look for them you will be told that David's place is empty.

Permit me also to remind you that among your assemblies there are SEATS EMPTIED BY SICKNESS for a while. You will not forget one place, the most conspicuous, which would be empty were it not filled by willing ministers who supply our lack of service. The Providence which empties that place is so wise and good that, though we cannot understand its object, we are sure that it will work for good and for the Glory of God. May I ask that, often as I am missed, I may have a fresh interest in your *prayers*, for these are a minister's wealth and a pastor's portion. Many others of the Lord's family are also sick and detained at home. They sigh as they remember the happy days when they went up to the House of God in company and mingled in the solemn feasts of Zion—but for them there are now no more the thunders of our united shouts of praise, nor the deep Amens of our forms of prayer—and they envy the very swallows that build their nests under the eaves of the sanctuary.

Many of us have such afflicted ones in our own families and God forbid that we should cease to sympathize with them in their deprivations. Yet long continuance of health may dry the fountains of pity and lead to forgetfulness of the sorrows of others. Therefore it is no superfluity when we remind the healthy that there are others far less favored to whom it is one of their sharpest sorrows that their places at public worship are empty. Let us pray that a portion may be sent to their homes, according to the old Law of David, "as his part is that goes down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarries by the stuff: they shall part alike." Let us try to make this rule of battle a matter of fact by carrying home to the Lord's prisoners as much of the sermon as we can.

Jacob did not go down at the first to Egypt, for he was aged and infirm, but his sons brought back corn for him, none the less. In telling the sick and bedridden the Truths of God which we have heard, our own memories will be refreshed. We are bound with those who are in bonds and we suffer with the suffering and, therefore, if we are living members of our Lord's mystical body, it is to us a matter of personal interest that David's seat is empty. In every well-ordered congregation there are SEATS EMPTIED BY HOLY SERVICE. Many Christian professors appear to think that their entire religious duty begins and ends with attendance upon the means of Grace—no village station receives their ministry, no ragged school enjoys their presence, no street corner hears their voice—but their pew is filled with commendable constancy.

We do not condemn such, yet show we unto them a more excellent way. We know scores of Brothers and Sisters who come to one service on the Sabbath for spiritual food and then spend the rest of the day in active labor for their Lord. They are not so unwise as to leave their own vineyard untended by neglecting personal edification, but when this is earnestly attended to, they hear their Master's call and go forth into the great harvest and use the strength which their spiritual meal has given them. In this way they are even more benefited than if they were always "feeding," for holy exercise helps their mental digestion and they all the more completely assimilate their sacred food! And, in addition, they have struck a blow at the spiritual selfishness which tempts us to enjoy religious feasts and to make ourselves comfortable while sinners are perishing around us.

Many are the Christians whose places ought to be empty during part of the Lord's Day—they are able-bodied and gifted and they ought not to eat the fat and drink the sweet all day long but should be engaged in carrying portions to those for whom otherwise nothing would be prepared. When the great king made a wedding feast for his son, he sent forth his servants into the highways and hedges to compel the wanderer's to come in. Did he starve those servants? Assuredly not! Yet he was not content to invite them to the table and leave the outsiders to hunger and faint. His servants found it to be their meat and their drink to do the will of him that sent them and to finish his work. Even so will Believers receive edification while they are seeking the good of others—like swallows, which feed on the wing—they shall find heavenly meat while they fly in the ways of service.

The Holy Spirit delights to give more "oil for the light" to those who are diligently shining amid the darkness. Yet, let me add a warning here—I have known some young Believers who have lacked prudence and have carried a good thing too far. Before they have well learned, they have been eager to teach and to do so they have ceased learning! Their multiplied engagements have left them no time for their own instruction and they have left an edifying ministry to enter upon labor for which they were not qualified. Wisdom is profitable to direct. The most of Christians need to fill their seats for a part of the Sabbath to hear the Word of God and *very few* can afford to spend the whole day in seeking the good of others. We grieve to meet with some who are absent from the Lord's Table for months because of their zealous occupations. This is presenting one duty to God stained with the blood of another!

It is the positive duty of every disciple to obey the Lord's command, "This do you in remembrance of Me" and efforts which necessitate neglect of the Divine precept must be curtailed. Often ought we to show His death until He comes. School teaching, street preaching, visiting the sick and so forth cannot be regarded as a substitute for hearing the Word and commemorating the death of the Redeemer! We must have time to sit at the Master's feet with Mary, or soon, like Martha, we shall be cumbered. Nevertheless, despite this word of caution, I am often glad to hear that "David's place was empty."

It is to be feared that too easily we could find SEATS EMPTIED FOR NO GOOD REASON. Ministers in many congregations are distressed by the irregular attendance of their hearers. A little rain, a slight indisposition, or

some other frivolous excuse will keep many at home. A new preacher has come into the neighborhood and the rolling stones are moved in his direction for a season to the grievous discouragement of the pastor. This evil of irregular attendance is most manifest at weekday services—there, often enough, David's seat is empty. No, not David's, for he longs to be even a doorkeeper in the house of his God—we mean the seat of Didymus, who was not with the Apostles when Jesus came—of Demas, who loved this present evil world and of many a Hearer who is not also a *doer* of the Word of God!

In many a congregation those who gather at meetings for prayer are shamefully few. I have no reason to complain of this as a fault among my own beloved people to any large extent and yet I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that there are some members of the Church who would have to carry their memories a long way back to remember what a Prayer Meeting is like. Little do they know what they have lost by their neglect. Ah, my Friend, does that refer to you? Is David's place empty? Then mend your ways and fill it! Of all soul-refreshing seasons, I have often found week-night services to be the best. Like oases in a desert, these quiet periods amid the cares of the week wear a greenness peculiar to themselves. Come and try whether your experience will not tally with mine. I believe you will find it good to be there.

Children, it is said, should be fed like chickens, "little and often," and to my mind, short, lively services coming frequently, on Sundays and week-days, are more refreshing than hearing two or even three long sermons on one day in the week only. At any rate it is good for us to keep the feast with our Brethren and not to make them ask, "Why did not the son of Jesse come either yesterday or today*?"* I must take the liberty of being very personal to the usual attendants at the Tabernacle. Dear Friends, do not let your seats be empty during my absence. I shall be distressed beyond measure if I hear that the congregations are declining!

The best preachers we can obtain are selected to address you and, therefore, I hope you will see no need to forsake your usual place. If you do so, it will reflect but small credit upon your pastor's ministry, for it will be manifest that you are babes in Grace, dependent upon one man for edification. "All are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas," and if you are men and women in Christ Jesus, you will get good out of them all and will not say, "Our own blunt Cephas is away and we cannot hear anyone else."

I beseech you be very regular in your attendance during my absence, lest those who preach to you should be discouraged and ourselves, also. Above all, *keep up the Prayer Meetings.* Nelson said, "England expects every man to do his duty" and, at this time, which is an emergency in our Church history, I would say—the Church expects every member to sustain all meetings, labors and offerings with unflagging energy—and especially to *keep up the Prayer Meetings.* There, at any rate, let it not be said of any of you, "David's place was empty."

Grace, mercy and peace be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.

THE POOR MAN'S PRAYER
NO. 1454B

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

"Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that You bear unto Your people: O visit me with Your salvation; that I may see the good of Your chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, that I may glory with Your inheritance." Psalm 106:4, 5.

BELOVED, we always reckon it a very hopeful sign when a man begins to think of personal religion. Merely to come with the crowd and professedly to worship is but poor work. But when a man gets to feel the weight of his own sin and to confess it with his heart before God—when he wants a Savior for himself and begins to pray alone that he may find that Savior—when he is not content with being the child of pious parents or with having been introduced into the church in his childhood after the fashion of certain sects. When he pines for real godliness, personal religion, true conversion—it is a blessed sign indeed. When a stag separates itself from the herd, we reckon that the dart has struck home—the wound is grievous and the creature seeks solitude—for a bleeding heart cannot bear company. Blessed are God's woundings, for they lead to a heavenly healing!

We are still happier when this desire for personal salvation leads a man to prayer—when he really begins to cry out before God on his own account—when he has done with the prayers he used to repeat by rote like a parrot and bursts out with the language of his heart. Though that language may be very broken or consist only of sighs and tears and groans, it is a happy circumstance. *"Behold,* he prays" was enough for Ananias—he was sure that Paul must be converted. And when we find a man praying and praying earnestly for personal salvation, we feel that this is the finger of God and our heart is glad within us.

The passage before us is one of those earnest personal supplications which we love to hear from any lips. I will read it again and then proceed to use it in two or three ways. *"Remember* me, O Lord, with the favor that You bear unto Your people: O visit me with Your salvation; that I may see the good of Your chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, that I may glory with Your inheritance."

Now first, *this is a very suitable prayer for the humble believer—it* was a humble believer who first uttered it. Next, *it would make a very suitable petition for a penitent backslider.* And thirdly, *it would be a very sweet gospel prayer for a seeker.* May the Spirit of God bless the word to each of these characters.

I. First, then, this is an admirable prayer for a poor humble Christian. I think I can hear him using the very words.

Notice with interest the first fear felt by this poor trembling Christian. *He is afraid that he is such a little one that God will forget him* and so he begins with, "*O remember me* with the favor which You bear to Your people." I know this man well. I think very much of him, but he thinks very little of himself. I admire his humility, but he often complains that he feels pride in his heart. He is a true believer, but he is a sad doubter. Poor man, he often hangs his head, for he has such a sense of his own unworthiness. I only wish he had an equal sense of Christ's fullness to balance his humility. He is on the road to heaven, but he is often afraid he is not and that makes him watch every step he takes. I almost wish some confident professors were altogether as doubtful as he is if they would be half as cautious. He is afraid to put one foot before another lest he should go wrong and yet he mourns his lack of watchfulness. He is always complaining of the hardness of his heart and yet he is tenderness itself. Dear soul—you should hear him pray. His prayers are among the most earnest and blessed you ever listened to, but when he is finished, he is afraid he never ought to have opened his mouth. He is not fit to pray before others, he says. He thinks his prayers the poorest that ever reach the throne of God. Indeed, he is afraid they do not get there but spend themselves as wasted breath. He has his occasional gleams of sunlight and when he feels the love of God in his soul he is as merry as the cricket on the hearth. There is not a man out of heaven more joyous than he when his hope revives. But oh, he is so tender about sin that when he finds himself growing a little cold or in any measure backsliding, he begins to flog himself—at which I am very glad, but he also begins somewhat to doubt his interest in his Lord, of which I am not glad, but pity him much and blame him, too, though with much sympathy for him. Now, I am not quite sure about this good man's name—it may be Little-Faith or Feeble-Mind, or is it Mr. Despondency I am thinking of? Or am I talking of Miss Much-Afraid? Or is it Mr. Ready-to-Halt? Well, it is someone of that numerous family. This poor soul thinks, "Surely God will forget me!" No, no, dear heart, He will not forget you. It is wonderful how God thinks of little things. Mungo Park picked up a little bit of moss in the desert and as he remarked how beautifully it was variegated, he said,

"God is here: He is thinking of the moss and, therefore, He will think of me." Once upon a time a little plant grew right in the middle of the forest and the trees stretched for many a mile all around it and it said to itself, "The sunlight will never get at me. I have a little flower which I would gladly open, but it cannot come forth till the sunbeam cherishes me. Alas, it will never reach *me!* Look at the thick foliage. Look at the huge trunks of those towering oaks and mighty beeches—these will effectually hide the sun from my tiny form." But in due season the sun looked through the trees like a king through the lattices and smiled on the little flower, for there never was a flower that God has not thought of and provided for. Say you not right well that *"each* blade of grass has its own drop of dew," and do you think that God will forget you, little as you are? He knows when swallows fly and when ants awake and gather their food and will He not think of you? Because you are little, you must not suspect the love of your heavenly Father. Mother, which child is that which you never forget? If you ever went to bed at night and left one of the children out of doors, I know which one it was *not.* It was not the babe which lies helpless in your bosom. You never forget that. And you helpless ones, you timid trembling ones, if the Lord must forget any, it would be the strong, but certainly not you. As you breathe the prayer, *"Remember me* with the favor that You bear to Your people," the Lord answers you, "I do earnestly remember you still."

Observe next, that this poor trembling heart seems to be in great trouble for fear the Lord should pass it by, but at the same time *feels that every good thing it can possibly receive must come from the Lord and must be brought to it by the Lord.* Note the words—"O visit me with Your salvation," as if he had said—"Lord, I cannot come to You. I am too lame to come, I am too weak to come, but visit me. O Lord, I am like the wounded man between Jericho and Jerusalem—I am half dead and cannot stir. Come to *me,* Lord, for I cannot move to You. Visit me, for only Your visits can preserve my spirit. I am so wounded and sorely broken and undone, that if You do not visit me with Your salvation even as if I never had been saved before, I must be lost."

Now, poor trembler let me whisper a half word into your ear and may God the Holy Spirit make it a comfort to you. You need not say, if you have a broken heart, "Lord, visit me." Do you not know that He dwells in you, for is it not written, "To this man will I look and with this man will I dwell, even with him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at My word"? Are you not the very person? I wish you could rejoice at God's word, but as you cannot, I am glad you tremble at it, for you are the man that God has promised to dwell with. *"Trembles at My word"*—

lay hold on that and believe that the Lord looks towards you and dwells with you.

What a plaintive prayer this is! Carefully consider that this poor, weak, humble, trembling one *longs to partake in the blessings which the Lord gives to His own people* and in the joy which He has in store for them. This is the way in which he speaks, "I hear many Christians around me say that they know and are persuaded—O that I had a little of their certainty. I hear them speak so confidently, with such full assurance, and I see the light leap out of their eyes when they talk about their sweet Lord and Master and all His love to them—oh, how I wish I could talk so! Poor me, I am only able to say, 'Lord, I believe: help You my unbelief.' I see them sitting at a loaded table and they seem to feast most abundantly, but as for me, I am glad it is written that the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from the Master's table, for if I get a crumb now and then, I feel so happy with it. But I wish I could sit and feast where others of God's children do. Oh that I could talk of rapt fellowship and close communion and joy and overflowing bliss! They tell me, some of them, that they sit down on the doorstep of heaven and look within and see the golden streets and that sometimes they hear stray notes from the harps of the blessed ones in the far-off country. Oh, how I wish I had a sip of these joys. But, woe is me, I dwell in Mesech and sojourn in the tents of Kedar—the only music that I hear is the din of a sinful world—the viols of them that make merry in wantonness. I miss those precious things which the saints delight in." Poor sorrowing heart, let me say to you, and say in God's name—If you love your Lord, all things are yours. They *are* yours freely to enjoy even at this moment. The Lord denies you no covenant blessing. Make bold to appropriate the sacred joys, for if you are the least child in the family, yet the heritage of God's children is the same for everyone. There is no choice thing that God will keep away from you. No, if there is one morsel more dainty than another it is reserved for such as you are. Be bold then. If you are the Benjamin in the family, you shall have Benjamin's mess which is 10 times larger than any other. He will comfort you and bless you. Only be of good cheer and when you are praying, "Favor me with the favor which You bear to Your people," let your faith hear Him say, "I am your portion." Rejoice in the Lord your God. Lift up the hands that hang down and confirm the feeble knees." Is not my text a sweet prayer for you? Pray it in faith and be at peace.

II. We will now look another way and say that our TEXT IS A SUITABLE PETITION FOR A POOR PENITENT BACKSLIDER. I know there are backsliders here, though, alas, I am not sure that they are penitent. Only

the Lord can read their hearts. But if they are penitent, I can hardly conceive a more suitable petition for them than that which is before us.

It is clear that this poor, pleading backslider *feels that he has forgotten His God.* Have *you* done that? You have been a church member and you have gone sadly astray. Have you quite forgotten His commandments? You thought you loved Him. You used to pray at one time. You had some enjoyment in reading and in hearing the word. But now you find your pleasure somewhere else. You have left your first love and gone after many lovers. But oh, if the Lord is gracious to you, you are lamenting your forgetfulness and though you have not remembered Him, the prayer leaps to your lips, *"Lord,* remember me." Blessed be His name, He does not so easily forget us as we forget Him. If you are a truly penitent backslider, your feelings of repentance prove that God remembers you. It is He that sets you weeping and makes you sorrow for your sin. If you had been altogether forgotten of God, you would not have any desire to return to Him. But those inward pangs, those secret throes, those desires to be restored to the Lord—these prove that He remembers you with the favor which He has towards His people.

And then, I think your next trouble will be this—*you feel that you have lost your fellowship with Christ* and you are right in so feeling, for, *"How* can two walk together except they are agreed?" How could Christ have fellowship with you in the ways of folly? Do you think Christ would come and talk comfortably to you while you are frivolous or while you are unclean? How could that be? All joyful communion between your soul and God is broken and well may you pray, "O visit me with Your salvation. Come back to me, Lord. Come and dwell in me again—

'Why should my foolish passions roam?
Where can such sweetness be
As I have tasted in Your love,
As I have found in Thee?'

Come back, my Lord, and visit me with Your salvation." Is not this a prayer made on purpose for you?

And next, you observe in the text that the poor backslider is *longing to get a sight of the good things which for a long time have been hid from him.* He cries, "That I may see the good of Your chosen." He has been out among the swine, but he could not fill his belly with the husks. He has been hungering and thirsting and now he remembers that in his Father's house there is bread enough and to spare. Backslider, do you remember that tonight? You know you are not happy and you begin to perceive that you never will be happy while you are living in the far country. If you had not been a child of God you might have made a happy worldling after the sort of happiness that worldlings know, but you are spoiled for a world-

ling if you have ever known the love of God. And you have known that, or else you have been indeed a hypocrite. Do you not sigh to the Lord to give you these good things again? Well, He will freely give them to you and He will not upbraid you. Come and try Him. He is ready to press you to His bosom and to forget and forgive the past and accept you in the Beloved.

The poor backslider praying in the words of my text *longs to taste once more the joy he used to feel* and therefore he says, "That I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation." And again, *he wants to be able to speak as he once could*—"that I may glory with Your inheritance." Poor man, he is ashamed to speak to sinners. He hangs his head in company, for there are some that call him a turncoat. He does not like to have it known that he was once a Christian and therefore he comes stealing in to the assembly of the saints as if he hoped no one would know him. There he is, but he feels half ashamed to be there—and yet he wishes that he were once more with the Christian brotherhood and could rejoice with them. My poor friend, you used to be bold as a lion for Christ and now you turn tail and fly. How can you be bold with all those inconsistencies? There was a time when you might have made a martyr, but now what a coward you are. And who wonders that you are so when they know that secret sin has sapped and undermined your profession and made you weak as water? I beg you to pray the *prayer*—"That I may glory with Your inheritance." You will never again make your boast in the Lord till you are restored, till you come back as you came at first with the old cry, *"Father,* I have sinned before You and am no more worthy to be called Your son." Come back even now, my brother, and get another application of the blood of sprinkling. Look again to Jesus. Ah, and I may here say, even if you have *not* backslidden, look again to Jesus. Those of us who have not fallen had better look to Him with our brethren who have fallen, for there is the same blessing needed by us all. We have all wandered to some extent. Come, let us look at those dear wounds anew. Can you not see Him? I think He hangs before me now. The crown of thorns is on His head and His eyes are full of languid pity and tearful grief. I see His *face* stained with spit and black and blue with cruel bruises. I see His hands—they are fountains of gore. I see His feet—they gush with rivulets of crimson blood. I look upon Him and I cry, "Was ever grief like Yours, O King of sorrows?" And as I look I remember that the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of all His people—and looking—my sin departs from me because it was laid on Him. Looking, my heart yearns to love and then yearns to leap. Looking, I come back to where I stood before and now once again Christ is my all and I rejoice in Him. Have you gone through

that process, backslider? If you have done so while I have been speaking, let us praise God together.

III. The last use I have to make of my text will, I hope, be beneficial to many here present. It is this—THIS IS A VERY SWEET PRAYER FOR A POOR SORROWING SEEKER. I beg all who desire conversion to remember this prayer. They had better jot it down and carry it home with them or better still, breathe it to heaven at once.

Consider it well. To begin with, it is *a sinner's prayer.* "Remember me, O Lord!" A sinner's prayer, I say, for the dying thief rejoiced to use the words. He could not have reached down for a prayer-book and said a prayer, poor man, when he was dying—and there was no need he should. This is the best of prayers—"Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." Trembling sinner, what suited the dying thief may well suit you. Breathe it now, *"Forget* my sins, my Father, but remember me. Forget my delays; forget my rejecting of a Savior; forget the hardness of my heart, but oh, remember me. Let everything pass away from Your mind and be blotted from Your memory but, dear Father, by the love of the Lord Jesus, remember me." Sinner, do not go home without presenting that prayer to God.

Note again, it is *the prayer of a lost one. "Visit* me with Your salvation." Nobody wants salvation unless he is lost. People may talk about salvation, who do not feel that they are lost, but they do not know anything about it and do not really desire it. Lost soul, where are you? Are you lost in a thousand ways—lost even to society? Well, here is a fit prayer for you—"Visit me with Your salvation." Jesus Christ has not come to seek and to save those who do not need saving, but He has come on purpose to seek and to save those who are lost. You are the man He came to bless. Look to Him and you shall find that He is the Savior you require. "Visit me with Your salvation"—I cannot get this prayer into your hearts, but God can—and I am praying in my own soul that many of you in the galleries or down below there, may now be crying, "Visit me with Your salvation."

Farther, remember that our text is *the prayer of one who has a dim eye*—"That I may *see* the good of Your chosen." We have told the seeker to look to Jesus, but he complains, "I try to look, but I cannot see." Beloved seeker, I do not know that you are bid to see. You are bid to look and if you could not see when you looked, you would at least have obeyed the gospel command. The *looking,* the *looking* would bring salvation to you. But for dim eyes Christ is the great cure. He can take away the cataract and remove the *gutta serena.* Pray tonight, "Lord, open my blind eyes that I may see the good of Your chosen."

Then it is a *prayer for a heavy heart.* "That I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation." The seeking soul moans out, "O that I had a little joy, or even a trembling hope. If it were ever so small a portion of light I should be glad." Pray for joy. The Lord waits to give it and if you believe in Jesus your joy shall be full.

And in the last place—not to detain you till you are weary—our text is *the prayer of a spirit that is humble and laid in the very dust.* It cries to God to enable it to glory with His inheritance because it is stripped of all other glory, emptied of its own boasts. Practically its plea is, "Lord, give me to boast in Your mercy and Your goodness, for I have nothing else to boast of."

Now, beloved hearer, this prayer I would most earnestly press upon you and I would press it upon you for these reasons.

Just think for a moment. Supposing you are living now without seeing the good of God's chosen, without being saved, what a wretched life it is to live! I cannot understand what men do without God. I cannot comprehend how they live. Do you have no cares? "Oh," you say, "we have anxieties in shoals." Well, where do you take them? I find I have troubles enough, but I have a God to take them to. What do you do with many troubles and no God? Do your children never distress your mind? How can you live with bad children and no God? Do you ever lose money in your business? Do you ever feel distracted? Do you ever say, "What shall I do? Which way shall I turn?" I suppose you do. Then what do you do without a helper or a guide? Poor weak thing as I am, I run under the shelter of my Father's wings and I feel safe enough. But where do you go? Where do you fly? What is your comfort? I suppose you are something like the poor creatures condemned to death in old times to whom they gave a stupefying drink so that they might die without feeling the horror of death—surely you must be under a strong delusion that you can believe a lie, for if you were in your senses you could not do without a God—no, not with your beautiful gardens and fine parks and wealth and riches, and much less—many of you—with your poverty and hard labor. Poor man without a God, how do you keep up your spirits? What comfort is there in your life? No prayer in the morning, no prayer at night—what days, what nights! Oh, men, I could as soon think of living without eating or living without breathing, as living without prayer. Wretched naked spirits your souls must be without God to cover them! But if it is bad to *live* without Christ—and I am sure it is—what will it be to *die* without Him? What will it be to look into the future and find no light—no light and nobody that can bring you any? You have sent to the minister and he has spoken with you, but he cannot help you. You have had the pray-

ers of your family who are sobbing at the thought of losing you, but you are looking out alone like one that gazes upon an angry sea in a cold winter's storm—and you can see nothing but the tangible dark. Or, to change the metaphor, you are like a man on yonder wreck. Look, he is clinging to the mast. He hears the blast go whistling by him and soon it comes back howling around him, as if hungry for its prey. He can hear the seabirds screaming in the sky and they seem to prophesy his doom. The waves break over him, drenching him with their brine till he is ready to freeze as he hangs between death's awful jaws. The lifeboat has been there and carried off all it can and it will never come back and though he clings with desperation, he knows it is a forlorn hope. He will drift out to sea and his corpse will lie where pearls lie deep, in the caverns where many thousand skeletons have bleached these many years. His case is terrible to the last degree and yet it is a feeble picture of a soul leaving the body without an interest in Christ's salvation. Before you get into that state, cry to God, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that You bear unto Your people. O visit me with Your salvation!"

But the mist darkens and the tempest lowers in tenfold fury when we come to think what it must be to rise again from the tomb without Christ. When that last shrill clarion has sounded and every grave and cemetery shall have given up their sleepers. When the sea has yielded up the dead that are there and battlefields are swarming with the myriad slain that live again. When in the sky shall be seen the great white throne and upon it the Son of Man who bled for sinners, now come to judge and to condemn His adversaries—what will men then do if they have no personal religion, no interest in Christ, no portion in His salvation? Scripture tells us that they will ask the rocks to hide them and the hills to cover them. But they have no hearts of compassion—they will yield no shelter. There will be no refuge for the ungodly and nothing before them except the fiery indignation and wrath of God. "Turn you, turn you, why will you die?"

This is a common scene to many of you, this great gathering in the Tabernacle. I must confess I cannot look upon it without emotion, though I see it twice each Sunday. Here are all of you, and I, a lone man, standing here to talk to you in God's name. It is as much as my soul is worth if I am not earnest with you, but ah, I am not half as earnest as I ought to be. Yet hear me once more. I am a true prophet at this hour when I warn you that you shall see this sight again if you reject the Savior. Across the flames of hell you will see it and you will say to yourself, "The preacher warned us. He told us to cry to God for mercy. He pointed us to the Savior. He bade us pray and pray then and there." You will re-

member my entreaties and then you will renew your agony with a wail which shall never end. You will cry, "God called, but I refused. He stretched out His hands, but I regarded Him not and now the day of grace is past and the Christ whom I despised laughs at my calamity—there is no hope—no hope. I knocked too late at mercy's door. My lamp went out. I was a foolish virgin and I am shut out in outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." In the name of the everlasting God, I pray you submit yourselves to Christ your Lord at once and you shall live. Amen. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 51.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—51, 584, 556.

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EVERY MAN'S NECESSITY
NO. 1455

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

"You must be born-again."
John 3:7.

WHEN men are perishing all around you it would be cruel to waste time in attempting to interest their minds or to amuse their fancies. We must do something more practical and give earnest heed to their pressing necessities. Is it famine which slays them? Let us feed them. Is it cold? Let us supply them with covering. Is it disease? Let us administer medicine. When the case is urgent, we confine ourselves to necessities and attend with our whole heart to that which *must* have our attention. That which *may be* can wait, but that which *must be* demands our immediate care. Now, the *spiritual* needs of men are urgent and among them the most pressing is their regeneration—they must be born-again or they are lost. Therefore, at this time we will dwell on this topic and give it our whole consideration, letting other interesting matters wait till this most weighty business is happily over. This is a *must* and we must press it upon you at once with our whole heart. Our earnest desire is for a great ingathering of souls to the garner of salvation, but in order to this they must be born-again. We have had many of you hovering round about us like birds around the fowler, but you are not as yet taken in the gospel net. This state of things cannot content us—we need to see you decided for Christ and truly born-again. You have long been hearers, but alas, you remain hearers only and are not "doers of the word." We do not want the fault to lie with us—if you continue unsaved it shall not be because we have not preached the gospel and kept to preaching it and preached it as a matter of life and death. Again then, we aim at the one point, the point of absolute necessity—"You *must* be born-again." We trust that if one arrow does not reach the mark, another may. At any rate, we will continue driving at the one target—the conversion of your souls. O you who as yet have not been brought to know the Lord, may the Holy Spirit guide the arrow at this hour.

And now we will have a little simple talk about the great experience called regeneration or the new birth, without which no man can *see* the kingdom of heaven, much less enter it.

I. And we shall remark concerning it, in the first place, that the change which is worked in us by the new birth is MOST THOROUGH. "You must be *born-again*." A new birth is the most sweeping and entire process conceivable. It is, in fact, more than a change, it is a creation. Regeneration is a great deal more than reformation of life or a becoming religious, for it is not, "You must be *washed,* you must be *improved,* you must be *elevated,"* but "You must be *born."* It is not enough that the present life, as already possessed, should be renovated; that the existing nature should receive fresh vigor and new tone, but "You must be *born-*

again"—a new life must be received and no improving the present life will suffice in its place.

It is also a great deal more than any change of opinion. I am always afraid of those persons who glory in being converted from one set of religious opinions to another. The best converts to a church are those who are brought into it from the world—those who migrate from other sections of Christianity are not often the most valuable acquisitions. Sometimes, like the convicts who leave their country for their country's good, they benefit their party best by leaving it and do not come to the newly adopted section of the church as an unmixed gain. The text says not, "You must change your opinions and drink in new notions," but, "You must have a new nature; you must be born-again." Notions may be altered again and again and yet the man may be no nearer being a child of God—but let the nature be changed by the Holy Spirit—and then the matter is accomplished. This it is and nothing short of this can land a man in heaven—he must become a new creature in Christ Jesus. The process of the new birth is so thorough that it is a great deal more than an alteration of a man's way of thinking, even upon the best of topics. A man may now think it his duty to be religious, whereas once he was debauched. He may now conceive it to be his duty to be sober, whereas before he was a drunk. He may feel it his duty now to be diligent, whereas before he was a sluggard. But all these put together would not amount to a new birth. We rejoice in reformation of any sort. The less sin there is in the world the better, but for all that, the vital point will not have been reached with all the alterations of thought and even of life of which a man is capable, for the text remains in force after all the renovations, conversions, and reformations that are possible to unaided flesh and blood—and it cries with stern, unchanging voice—"You must be born-again."

The person concerned may have passed through a long series of ceremonies. He may have been received with a welcome into a so-called church and from the hands of those who think themselves priests, there may have distilled the aqueous imposture which is said to regenerate the soul. But there is something more needed than priests can convey or than water can effect. Our Lord Jesus Christ meant something far other than the hocus pocus of an empty form when He said, "You must be born-again." I say in the presence of all that have been baptized in infancy and all that have been baptized in adult age but were not believers—you, even you, baptized infidels—"*You* must be born-again." If you have been baptized and re-baptized, but are still unbelievers and have not the Spirit of God in your souls, "You must be born-again."

What does all this mean? And what is the signification of this change so thorough? Do not the words evidently mean that a *new nature* must be created in us? For a life, a nature is the production of a birth. At a birth there comes into the world a life which was not there before. There must come into us a *new life* to which, by nature, we are perfect strangers—something far beyond that which belongs to us as we are born after the flesh—a life that was not latent in the infant to be gradually developed in the training of the child, but a life which is altogether absent till divine grace implants it there. "You must be born-again"—you

must be created again or as the Scriptures say, "Begotten again unto a lively hope." The life within you must be as fresh a creation as was the light when God spoke it or as was the world when God formed it out of nothing. A work of divine power must be exercised upon you equal to that which raised the Lord Jesus from the dead and gave Him glory.

With a new life in the matter of our ordinary birth there begins a *new experience*. To the new-born child everything is new. Every pain, every sensation of pleasure is all novel to him—he has known nothing of all this before. And though we may have attained to manhood or even to old age when we are born-again, the spiritual life is all a fresh experience. There are new feelings of contrition; there is a new faith; there is a new joy, a new hope—everything is new—"Old things have passed away and all things have become new." Though the man may have traversed many paths and experienced many sensations, yet the moment he is born-again, he is a stranger in a strange land and he is led in a way which he knows not and in paths which he has not seen. All young souls just born to God, however old they may be as to the bodily reckoning, rejoice in the sacred novelty of the new life and they thank and bless God who has put His hand a second time to the work and quickened them into newness of life.

Now, as there is a new life, a new nature, and a new experience, so is there to the child born and the man regenerated a *new world*. It is all new to the child—its brothers and sisters surprise it. When it is taken into the open air and sees the green fields for the first time, it marvels at them. To the little one everything is fresh. It lives in a museum; it is surrounded with wonders. Even the toys which grown-up people look upon with so much contempt are quite marvelous to the little one—it is charmed with them all. A Christian, a man or woman born-again, lives in a new world. It is all new to him now, as I remember to have heard a young girl say when first she found the Savior. When she came to confess her faith in Christ she said, "Either I am altogether changed or else the world is"—and I could not help telling her I hoped it was both—I hoped she herself was changed and that this change had produced the other, so that all things had become new. There is a new heaven and a new earth reserved for us by-and-by, and even now, while we are in this world, it is no longer to us what it is to the carnal man. To the twice-born, the world is turned upside down. The things we once loved we cease to care for. Former objects of ambition we count but dross, while things that were contemptible become to us objects of supreme consideration. The Holy Spirit having changed us, our views of all around us are entirely different. Such must be your experience, dear hearer, or you will live as carnal men and die in your sins. You *must* experience this divine creation, no matter who you may be—there can be no exceptions—you must know this great change or be lost. You may have been dandled on the lap of piety; the name of Jesus may have mingled with the hush of your first lullaby; you may scarce at first have heard any music but that of holy hymns; you may have been taught morality and sanctity by the example of many generations of ancestors, but be you who you may or what you may, you must receive a new life and you must pass through a new experience—and you must live in a new world or be lost. You must

live in the spiritual world where all is new. You must converse with God, a thing unknown to you before. You must converse with His Son to whom you have been a stranger. You must feel the power and energy of the Spirit working in you, a matter which you have never known till now or there is no hope for you.

Note that every birth brings into operation a *new force*. A new worker is born. He is feeble as yet, but those little feet will yet be strong for running and those tiny hands will yet become dexterous at some useful craft. And so, when a soul is born to God, it feels a new power within and it becomes a new force. It is obedient to a power which it never recognized before and a power is put forth from it which it had not been able to exercise before and did not even understand. A new power has come among men when another soul is born to God—the spiritual world is stronger and the carnal world is all the weaker for the birth of another spiritual man.

I do not know how to put the matter better than this, but I think I have shown you that regeneration is a most thorough change. To be born-again is no child's play. It is not enough for a man to rise under a sermon and say, "I have been impressed and touched by it and I believe I am converted." There is a vast difference between saying, "I am born-again," and really undergoing the heavenly birth. It is not making a profession or even maintaining it with credit for years which will suffice, for, alas, some have seemed almost apostles and yet have been altogether sons of perdition. You must come to know vitally indeed and of a truth in your own soul what it is for the flesh to be crucified with Christ and for a new life to be implanted in you supernaturally as the work of the Holy Spirit or else you cannot enter into the kingdom of God. The work is radical, spiritual, marvelous, and divine.

II. In the second place, it is MOST WONDERFUL. It is most wonderful in the sense of mystery—as to *the manner of it*. It is not easy to preach from this text and attempt to go minutely into details for if we did so, we might venture too far. I have read treatises upon the subject which were far too destitute of delicacy and calculated to disgust rather than to impress. We do not pry and must not pry into a divine secret. "You hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell where it comes, or where it goes; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." Who knows how the Holy Spirit works? That He works by means of the Word of God we know. That He blesses the truth read in a book or heard from the minister—this we know—but how it is He enters into the heart, how it is He creates a spirit within us, how he begets in us the spiritual life—who can tell but God only? But then we do not need to know—it is enough for us to be assured of the fact—the manner we need not pry into. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." They know experientially what it is to be born-again, but they themselves could not explain how it is that the sacred wind blows, nor how the Spirit operates upon the human heart. Many discussions there have been as to whether the Spirit of God, as it were, comes nakedly into contact with the nature of man or whether He always works in and by truth and thought and so on. Into all this it is not necessary for us to go. We would rather admire, wonder, and adore, for these are better than merely to comprehend since a man may under-

stand all mysteries and yet be as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

It is a mystery as to the *supernaturalness of the operation*, for evermore true regeneration is always supernatural. There is no doubt that moral persuasion does much with men; that the influence of association will often improve men's manners and habits; that great results may flow from education, especially if it is of the right kind. And that much may be developed in mankind that is admirable, honest, lovely, and of good repute. But this is nothing to the purpose, since it is not what our Savior meant—it falls short of the new birth and is indeed quite another thing. The Holy Spirit, the third person in the blessed Trinity must as much come to work upon us as God came forth to work upon this world in its creation or else we are not born-again. It is not enough that we of ourselves and in the energy of our old nature begin to pray, repent, and so on, for all that which can come of our flesh will still be flesh. In regeneration it is the Spirit who begins by infusing the life and then the new nature begins to pray and repent. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit and therefore the new birth must be a spiritual operation in order to produce that spiritual nature without which we cannot see and enter into the things of God. This is a solemn matter for you, my hearer, if you have been merely an attendant upon the means of grace and a lover of the outward forms of religion. Do I mean to tell you that you must undergo a change which is beyond your own working, which all the men in this world and all the angels in heaven could not work in you, but which God Himself must perform? I do mean that—I mean nothing less than that. "Am I to understand," you say, "that almighty power must work upon me as much as in my creation?" I mean that and that it needs as much power to cause you to be born-again as it did to make a world. Yes, and that the same power which raised Jesus Christ from the dead when He had slept three days in the grave is needed in all its fullness to raise you from your death of sin—and must be exerted if ever you are raised at all. It is a wonderful thing that the Spirit of God should condescend to undertake this work and that the Lord should set Himself a second time to the work. It is surprising that when the vessel was marred upon the wheel and spoiled, instead of breaking it up and consigning it to destruction, He should put forth all His power again and fashion the clay to His own model. He stoops to make us twice born, new-created, begotten again, that we might at the last come to wear the image of Jesus, the first-born among many brethren. "You must be born-again"—the infinite Jehovah must deign to be a second time our Creator or we must hopelessly perish.

This work is wonderful because of *the grandeur of the relationship into which it introduces us*. The child that is born has a father from the very fact of its birth and we that are born from above cry, "Abba, Father," from the very fact that we are regenerated. Adoption gives us the *rights* of children, but only regeneration gives us the *nature* of children. Because we are sons, God sends forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." If I have been born-again, no matter what my station in life or position in society, God is my Father and it follows that Jesus Christ is my Brother—and this not merely in form and in

name as men call each other brethren when there is no actual relationship—but there is a real relationship between us and Christ Jesus and the divine Father, for we are made "partakers of the divine nature." We are the sons of God, and if sons of God then are we brethren of Christ. It must be so and it follows from this that if children, then heirs, and if Christ is the heir, we are joint-heirs with Him. My brethren, what privileges spring out of the relationship which arises from the new birth, for our Father pledges Himself for our support, for our comfort, for our education, for all that is necessary for our perfection in the day of the home-bringing when we shall see Him face to face. What can happen to a man so great as to be born-again? Suppose some of the poorest of the earth who have swept the streets for a paltry pittance should suddenly be elevated by royal favor to the peerage. Or imagine that by some revolution of the wheel of providence they should become emperors and kings—yet what of that? The change would be extraordinary and men would wonder at it, for the passages in history which have been thought most noteworthy have been those wherein paupers have mounted from the dunghill to the throne and fishermen have cast aside their rough garments to put on the imperial purple. But these strides from nothingness to greatness are inconsiderable and trifling compared with rising from being a slave of Satan to become a son of God. To be elevated by God Himself from the darkness and degradation and bondage under which we are brought by the fall and by actual sin, to the liberty, to the glory, to the eternal blessedness of the children of God—this surpasses all conception. This can only be ours through our being born-again. Our first birth makes us sons of Adam; our second birth makes us sons of God. Born of the flesh, we inherit corruption—we must be born of the Spirit to inherit incorruption. We come into this world heirs of sorrow because we are sons of the fallen man. Our new life comes into the new world an heir of glory, because it is descended from the second man, the Lord from heaven. Thus I have spoken upon the wonderful character of this work as well as upon the thoroughness of it.

III. Now, let us remark, in the third place, that wonderful and mysterious as the new birth must always be, it is MOST MANIFEST. The house knows when a child is born. There are mysteries surrounding its birth, but the fact is apparent enough. You shall soon hear its cry in the nursery and before long its prattle in the parlor. You shall see the joy of the parents as they clasp their offspring and the care with which they watch for its good. So in the new birth, we know not how the Spirit works, but we know that He does work and we soon see that a marvelous change has come over those whom He has made possessors of the heavenly seed, creatures of the new life. Those who know converted persons best are among the first to perceive the transforming miracle of grace. Do you not think that Elstow knew when John Bunyan had found the Savior? The bell-ringers knew it—there was no more Sabbath-breaking. And the few poor, godly people that used to meet at Bedford knew it, for he crept into their midst and began to ask them about the things which had become the delight of his soul. We sometimes hear of a person being born-again and not knowing it—a somewhat singular matter. Yet I suppose that such an event, after a fashion, very commonly happens in the Epis-

copalian denomination, because if persons are born-again in infant baptism there are thousands in London who have undergone the change. But I am sure that they cannot be sure of it, for their own lives would not tell them so and their own emotions and feelings would not lead them to any such belief. Regeneration is a poor business if these baptized rebels are regenerate. Why, at that rate our prisons swarm with regenerated thieves and our streets are infested with regenerated harlots, and occasionally we have regenerate murderers—all born-again in their baptism, made children of God, members of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. The lie is sickening. The devil himself laughs at it. Of all transparent falsehoods, surely that of baptismal regeneration is the grossest. It is a marvel that men who live and walk among sane persons should ever fall into it. Ah, sirs, where the true heaven-given life is found, there is something to show for it. Does a man say, "I am regenerate"? Come, then, sir, what is the difference in you? What life do you lead? Have you a higher objective than the ordinary sons of men? Are you swayed by higher motives? Are there diviner impulses pulsing in your soul than those which stir the hearts of worldlings? "For except your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees," the best of worldlings, "you cannot enter into the kingdom of God." If the love of Christ within does not make us better than the best of worldly men, we give no evidence of having experienced the renewing work of God the Holy Spirit.

The heavenly life is very manifest—and it is all the more so from the fact that there are certain signs which always attend and attest the new birth. Persons may be born-again and yet they may not be able to see with us in certain points of doctrine, but there are some things which all the regenerates agree about. For first, *every soul that is born-again repents of its sin*. If a man lives in his sin as he used to do, he must not pretend that he is a twice-born man or he will mightily deceive himself. If he can look upon sin in the same light as he did before; if he can find pleasure in it, yes—if he does not unfeignedly turn from it with loathing and seek the mercy of God to blot it out—he knows nothing of what regeneration is. Again *all the regenerate have faith.* They all agree in finding the sole ground of their hope in the blood and merit of Jesus. Meet them anywhere and they will tell you they have no confidence except in the Savior's precious blood. He is all their salvation and all their desire. They rest upon this rock, every one of them, and no matter what high professors they may be or what lofty offices they hold in the church, if Christ is not their one and only trust, they know not what it is to be born-again.

In addition to this, *all that have passed from death unto life pray*. If it really rises from the heart, prayer is an infallible mark of the new birth. If it can be said of a man, "He does not pray," then he is still dead in his sins, the Spirit of God has not renewed his soul. I might mention some other holy signs which are invariable accompaniments of the new birth, but these three will suffice for all practical purposes. You can test yourselves, beloved, by them. Have you repented? Have you faith towards God? Do you rejoice to draw near to God in prayer? If these things are in you, they are marks of the new life, for they were never yet found in the spiritually dead. Do you groan over sin? A corpse does not groan—

gracious mourning over transgression is one of the surest proofs of inward spiritual life. Trust in Jesus is an equally clear sign of spiritual life, for the dead man does not know what it is to trust. And genuine prayer is equally a certain token of life received from above. A pang of penitential grief, a thought of holy trust, and a yearning of inward prayer are more than all the unregenerate upon earth can compass, even though they should be doctors of divinity or cardinals of the church.

This new life, the new birth, is a very manifest thing from the power that it puts into men after it has had time to develop itself. At first, converts are trembling and weak, but if they have received the new life they gather strength and there is a power in it which the church soon rejoices in and which the devil trembles at. This power, of course, can be kept under restraint by unbelief and other follies, but it ought to have full range and should never be repressed. I often wish our Christian people were a little more natural in their expression of what they feel. If any brother cries, "Amen" very heartily after prayer, many look at him, but in the primitive church it was the universal custom of those who joined in prayer to say, "Amen," by way of endorsing it and making it their own. I wonder why Christian people have, to so large an extent, given up the practice. It is a most fit and proper one and ought to be restored. I read the other day of a good Bible Christian brother who sometimes, when his heart was merry within him with joy in the Holy Spirit, would even leap for joy as he went to the pit to work. Why should he not do so? Yet you do not like the look of it, do you? I would a good deal sooner a man should be as nimble as David before the ark than be as sleepy as some Christians are, who if they have any joy repress it and never let it out—they are afraid of expressing their joy for fear they should be misjudged. Let it not be so with you. If you let the new life within you have its own course, you may be thought eccentric, but in those eccentricities will lie your force. Who is he that shall cramp us and hold us in when the eternal Spirit quickens us? If God has blotted out our sins, we will praise and magnify His name. And if we have been delivered from going down into the pit, we will tell others of it and not hold our tongues. Even though our testimony may not be delivered in the most classical style and our telling forth of the precious Savior's love may not be all that the educated may wish it to be, yet if we should hold our peace, the stones of the street would cry out and therefore we must and we will speak. He that has a well within him bubbling up must let it gush forth—and he that has the new life within him will, in one form or other, become a power in the midst of his fellow men and the secret will ooze out that he is a twice-born man.

I cannot linger longer. Regeneration is a thorough change and a wonderful change—but it is a manifest change and in some men it is especially so. Be it our aim to prove to a demonstration that we are born from above.

IV. But now, very briefly, regeneration is a MOST IMPERATIVE change. You *must,* you *must,* you *must* be born-again. You may be rich or you may be poor, but "You *must* be born-again." You may be intelligent, you may be educated, you may be talented, but "You *must*, you *must* be born-again." Many things are desirable, but one thing is needful, impera-

tively needful—you must, you must, you must be born-again. This imperative necessity may be seen from many points of view. We cannot mention them all, but just one or two. *If you are not born-again, you have no life*, no spiritual life. The first birth gave you bodily life and mental life, but it did not give you spiritual life—it could not do so, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh and no more. Now, you must have spiritual life or else you are dead in trespasses and sins and to all that has to do with spiritual blessings—to a spiritual gospel, a spiritual salvation, a spiritual heaven—to all these things you are dead as the corpses in their graves are dead to the business of today. There may be great changes taking place in politics—trade may be very prosperous or it may be depressed, but the dead man has no interest in the nation or its commerce—how can he have? So is it with you. Until you are born-again, the spiritual world is shut to you and you are indifferent to it. Angels may be rejoicing and believers may be rejoicing over saved souls, but you care nothing about it. The Lord Jesus Himself may be seeing of the travail of His soul, but it is nothing to you and it *must be* nothing to you because you are dead. Oh, if our bodies could take the shape of our souls, there would be many carcasses sitting before me in these pews. Ah, strange and ghastly sight! We thank God that He conceals the spiritual from our eyes, else we might, in horror, leave the places where we sit because we should find ourselves in close companionship with the dead. What a horrible thing a dead soul must be if our spirits could now perceive it as our senses would perceive a corpse. Let us pause here to realize striking facts in this connection. Some of you are linked in marriage with the spiritually dead. Some of you have dwelling in your house the children of your care who are dead while they live. You will sit to-night at the supper table with the spiritually dead. Regard them in that light and your hearts will perhaps be moved to pray more intensely for them than you have ever done. You that sit regularly in this place, I would like you to remember this fact when this house is crowded. Think, "In my pew there are sitting an unconverted man and an unconverted woman—and they are dead"; we don't expect them to feel for themselves, but we do expect the living to feel for them. My dear hearers who are unrenewed, do you not see that you must be born-again, for unless you are so, you will remain dead to spiritual things?

Furthermore, remember that a man who is not born-again *has no spiritual capacity*. We must be receivers, first, in the spiritual life, but the dead sinner as yet, until God quickens Him, can receive nothing. How often are the saints of God spiritually comforted, instructed, and enriched under the preaching and hearing of the Word of God, but it is their spiritual nature that receives the enrichment. The unregenerate have no spiritual nature—they are *carnal,* sold under sin—their mental powers as well as their bodily appetites are enslaved. Therefore they have no power to receive the blessing. The gracious and ever-blessed rain of the Spirit comes, but they are not like Gideon's fleece ready to drink it in, but like a hard stone upon which the drops may descend but cannot be saturated with the moisture, nor softened by it. Unregenerate men are broken cisterns which it is vain to attempt to fill. Even if God's own grace were to come to them it could not be retained, for they have not the capacity to

hold it. Only the spiritual can receive the spiritual. You must, then, be born-again to have a spirit by which spiritual things are discerned and received. Do you not see that you must be born-again?

Once more, you must be born-again because *without the Sprit of God you are not the children of God, and consequently you have no spiritual inheritance*. The Spirit causes us to be born—that birth makes us children, and our being children makes us heirs. If we are not born-again we are not children, therefore we are not heirs and we are out of the heritage, for God's heritage of glory is for the heirs of grace and for none others. And none shall come into the eternal portion but those who are born in His house and are His true sons and daughters. Universal fatherhood, whatever that may be, brings us common mercies, but it is the special fatherhood which God has towards the living in Zion which brings us special blessings. You must, then, be born-again or lose all share in the divine inheritance. No soul can ever cross the threshold of heaven that has not received the new life. No matter how abundant its prayers, nor how multiplied its acts of religiousness, unless it has been born-again, the gates of paradise are forever fastened against it. Banished from the presence of Jehovah's glory, there is only one other place where it can dwell—and that must be where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched. "You must be born-again."

V. I will finish my discourse by saying that this new birth is EMINENTLY PERSONAL. "You must be born-again." The idea of proxy is quite apart from the figure of the text. A man is born himself *in propria persona*—no other can be born for him—so here the change which must be worked in us must be personally experienced and individually known and felt. What delusion it is to fall back upon a parent's godliness or a godfather's promises, or to imagine that the minister or the so-called priest can stand before God for us. "You"—"*You* must be born-again" and if you are not, you shall never enter the kingdom of God.

Now, I think I hear passing through the congregation at this moment the whisper of many hearts who are saying, "This is very discouraging. We like to hear, 'Only believe and you shall be saved.' We are glad to be told that, 'Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life.' But this distresses us, for it does not open the door as wide as we could wish." Believe me, I am very glad to tell you of the free and wide gospel of grace. It is joyful work for me to bring that welcome message to you and I am sure I bring it as constantly as I come upon this platform. My most frequent note is—"Look unto Christ and be saved all you ends of the earth." But at the same time, God forbid that you should be built up upon a false foundation, or that your faith and confidence should stand apart from the truth of God as it is in Jesus. It will be found to be wood, hay, and stubble if it is so. But you say my sermon is discouraging—had you not better ask, "Is it true?" A person has been building a house and we see him piling up stones, but he has never dug out a foundation. It is certainly discouraging to him to tell him that it is not the right way to build a house, but it will be a great mercy for him to be discouraged in a work which is so foolish. It will be a great saving to him in the long run, if all that he has already built should come down at once and he should even now begin at the beginning once more and lay a good foundation

and make sure work of it. It would be foolish to cry out, "Do not discourage him." He ought to be discouraged. Yes, indeed, we would discourage all that will end in disappointment. The fact is, your efforts, your doings and your merits, all of them, at their very best, must be a failure and it is a good thing for us to tell you so. "But what am I to do?" asks one. That, permit me to remind you, is not the best question for you to ask, for if the work of salvation were what *you* must do, surely it would be left undone. You may put the question, "What must I do to be saved?" but we will point you away from doing and we will tell you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that you may be saved. If you persist in saying, "What must I *do,"* we will tell you that the sooner you look away from all that you can do, the better—for the work of salvation from sin is the work of the Spirit of God in you and you must come to look to Him through Jesus Christ that He may work in you all those graces and gifts which shall adorn your future life. Faith looks to the blood of Jesus for the pardon of sin and then looks to Him for His Spirit to overcome the power of sin within the heart—nor does she look in vain—but if you look elsewhere you will search till your eyes fail you and never see your desire. Would to God we could bring you, not only to discouragement, but to despair of yourselves. When you shall feel you are powerless, we shall have hope of you, for then you will leave yourselves in the hands of Him who can do all things. When self's strength is gone, God's strength will come in.

"Oh, but you tell me I must have divine power working in me." We do tell you that—we can tell you nothing less—and if that power is ever at work in your soul, its first effect will be to bring you to confess this and you will fall down before the footstool of divine mercy and say, "Lord save me or I perish. God be merciful to me a sinner." I do not want to rouse your activity, you unconverted people—I want to rouse you to the conviction that you are lost and I pray God the Holy Spirit may so convince you! I wish not to make you think, "We can cure ourselves," but oh, that you would feel that you are diseased and that, though you have destroyed yourselves, your remedy lies in a higher hand—that you must look to Jesus only for healing. To get the supernatural element into the matter is that which we would strive for and may God the Holy Spirit help us in it. We would have you look away from what is in you or can come from you and trust to what Christ did on the cross, to what the gracious Father is waiting still to do, and what the Holy Spirit is sent on purpose to work in you that you may be saved. Oh that you may begin to pray for the divine power! May you never rest in anything short of the divine working in your spirit; it is to this we would bring you.

Now you know all this and have known it for years, the most of you. To know it—ah, how great a privilege if not abused! How great a responsibility if the knowledge shall end here! Yet to know it, oh how sad unless you *feel* it! To feel that, "I must be born-again," and to be wretched till I am renewed in heart is a good beginning. I pray that you may go home and feel, "There is no pillow in this world that will suit my head till I have laid it upon the Savior's bosom. There is no bliss that can give me solace till I have found pardon in the wounds of my Redeemer." God grant you may sigh and pant in this way and we shall then believe that you are regenerate. May you receive the Lord Jesus and He will give you power to

become the sons of God, for those who believe in Him were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Then shall you know the secret of regeneration and the Lord Himself shall be revealed in you. Then shall you know that you are blessed of the Lord, for flesh and blood could not have revealed this unto you. May the Holy Spirit be within you evermore. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 3:1-21.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—456, 448, 461.

TO MY HEARERS AND READERS AT THE TABERNACLE AND ELSEWHERE:

BELOVED FRIENDS—By the tender kindness of God, the journey here was made without excessive fatigue, and now I trust that genial weather will bring with it rapid restoration. This place has participated in the severe weather which has swept over the Continent, so that I miss just now the bright sunshine to which I have been formerly accustomed. Yet it is comparatively warm and so far is beneficial to an invalid. Rest is the main thing and rest I hope to find that I may come back to you strengthened for sacred service.

It is at the request of many that I write these few lines; otherwise I should be better content to say nothing about myself. Tottering on my staff today in weakness, I hopefully look forward to the time when I shall stand among you in fullness of vigor. God grant that mental, and above all spiritual, strength may be given me for the preaching of the word in your midst, and that my long bodily affliction may assist to that end. I trust I shall not be forgotten in your prayers when it is well with you. I also hope that the various enterprises such as the College and Orphanage will not be allowed to languish because their President is ill. Peace be to you all.

Yours very heartily,
C. H. SPURGEON.

MENTONE, January, 1879

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PEACE—A FACT AND A FEELING
NO. 1456

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

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."
Romans 5:1.

WONDERFUL is the power of faith. In the Epistle to the Hebrews our apostle tells us of the marvelous exploits which it has worked in subduing kingdoms and obtaining promises, in quenching the violence of fire and stopping the mouths of lions, in braving perils and doing deeds of prowess. Still, to us personally, one of the most wonderful of its effects is that it brings us justification and consequent peace. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." If we know the justifying power of faith and the way in which like a hand it puts upon us the matchless garment of the Savior's righteousness, we shall value that faith as our first parents did the gracious hand of God which made coats of skins and covered their nakedness. The little faith we have will make us crave for more, and every need we feel will make us long to prove its virtue in our own souls to meet our own personal case by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

Now, faith brings to the soul, according to the text, two blessings. It is not the creator of these things, but the conveyance, the channel, the conduit pipe through which these favors come to us. First, *it brings us a state of peace*—"being justified by faith." And secondly, *it bring us a sense of peace*—"we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

I. Our first thoughts shall be about that most important of all matters—A STATE OF PEACE WITH GOD.

In our natural state, we have no peace. God is angry with us because we are sinful and we are at variance with God because He is holy. God cannot agree with us—"Can two walk together except they are agreed?" And we cannot agree with God for, "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." There is a breach between the rebellious creature and the righteous Creator—sad that it should be so, but such is the case by nature with every man that is born of woman. We are set against the Lord. We kick against His providence, we rebel against His commands, we resist His Holy Spirit, we reject His love as manifested in the death of Christ, and we would live and die in this hostility if it were not for His almighty grace. Before ever we can enjoy peace within our hearts there must be a state of peace established between us and God. We must submit ourselves to the Lord and He must forgive the past and make with us a covenant of peace or else there is no peace for us. "There is no peace, says my God, unto the wicked."

Let me briefly explain to you the way in which we come to possess peace with God. We are condemned criminals, though we do not consider ourselves to be in such a critical condition. We persist that we are righteous, we decline to acknowledge the jurisdiction of God's law, and we refuse to acknowledge the justice of its sentence. Therefore, before we can have peace with God we must be brought into court, hear the indictment against us, and be put on our trial. When thus arraigned, we must put in our plea. Do you plead, "Not guilty"? Then, man, you challenge your accuser to bring forward the evidence which will soon spoil your conceit and crush you with its weight. Before there can be peace between us and God *we must with all our hearts plead "guilty*." We must confess the truth, for God will never agree with liars, or with those who indulge self-deception. He is a God of truth and dissemblers can have no communion with Him. Being guilty, we must take the place of the guilty—it is our proper position—and it is due to the Judge of all the earth that we take it. To refuse to do so is contempt of court. There is mercy for a sinner, but there is no mercy for the man who will not acknowledge himself a sinner. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." But if any man says that he has no sin he is a liar and the truth is not in him. And there cannot be peace between him and God while he is in that humor.

It seems a stern demand and very galling for our pride to have to stand in the dock and in answer to the question, "Guilty or not guilty?" reply, "Guilty, Lord, guilty. Whatever the consequences may be, guilty." But to some of us it no longer seems to be difficult because we could not now plead otherwise. We are so conscious of our guilt that we cannot escape from a sense of it. "If I wash myself with snow water and make my hands ever so clean, yet shall You plunge me in the ditch and my own clothes shall abhor me." We cannot look upon a single day without being convicted of sin and in reviewing our past lives from our childhood; we are over and over constrained to blush at the memory of our waywardness and our willfulness, our perverseness and our provocation. The faults and the follies that have tracked our course haunt us till our very looks would tell the truth though our tongues were silent. To plead guilty has now become a positive, though a painful, relief to us. It is the ending of a vain show which we found it hard to keep up. It is coming to the bottom of the matter and knowing the worst of our case. Dear hearer, before you can have peace with heaven you must take up your true position and plead guilty. I pray the Holy Spirit to lead you to do so. It is His work to convict us of sin and if He shall exercise His divine office upon any of us, we shall no longer profess like the Pharisee that we are not as other men, but like the publican we shall heartily pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Supposing that with confusion of face, contrition of heart, and awakened conscience we admit and acknowledge our inexcusable guilt, *the next thing requisite to our peace is that we should admit the justice of the divine sentence* and reverence instead of reviling the Judge of all the earth, against whom we have so grossly revolted. There are men who will say, "Yes, I am guilty and sinful, but still the penalty is out of proportion

to my criminality. I cannot believe that God will deal so severely with the offenses of His creatures." Now, however rational such reflections may sound, they certainly are not acceptable with God. Of this thing, my friend, I guarantee you—if the Holy Spirit has ever shown you sin in its natural hideousness and deformity—you will think nothing too bad for it. You will cry from the depths of your soul, "Let it be condemned, let it be punished." I would not, if I could, lift a finger to prevent God from punishing sin. Whatever a man sows, that must he reap—the result of sin must follow its commission. The foundations of society would be undermined and there would be no living in the world if there were no laws or if laws might be violated with impunity. There would indeed be no proof that there was a great Judge of all the earth if He did not do right. And if He does right, He must punish sin, for it ought to be punished. Were I the judge of the quick and the dead, the first thing that I would do would be to condemn myself, for I deserve condemnation and punishment, Neither would it yield my heart the least comfort to be told that God could wink at sin. I want not such a God, neither could I endure to think that the law of righteousness was thus relaxed. My conscience would not be relieved of a sense of obligations I could not deny, nor of impurities I could not cleanse, nor of wrongs I could not rectify by a suspicion that the Majesty of heaven had threatened a damnation which did not exist. I pray the Spirit of God to bring you, my hearer, not only to be convinced of sin, but of righteousness and of judgment to come. God is righteous in fixing a day in which He will judge the world by the man, Christ Jesus, according to our gospel.

This appears to be a painful process, to be bound to confess your guilt and then to bare your neck to the sword of vengeance and say, "You will be justified when You judge and will be clear when You condemn, for against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight." Yet, there cannot be any peace with God till we come to it—because there can be no peace with the God of truth where there is any prevarication. Lasting peace must be founded upon everlasting truth. The fact is, we are guilty and we deserve the punishment which God apportions to guilt—and we must agree with that truth, grim as it looks, or else we cannot be friends with God.

The next essential to our receiving justification is this—the prisoner is guilty, sentence is pronounced, and he admits the righteousness of it—he is asked if he has anything to say why the sentence should not be executed and he stands speechless. And now comes in the abounding *mercy of God, who, in order to our peace, finds a substitute to bear our penalty and reveals to us this gracious fact.* He puts His Son into the sinner's place. Voluntarily does the divine Savior take upon Himself our nature and come under the law—and by a sovereign act, Jehovah lays upon Him the iniquity of us all. That sin having been laid on Christ, He has borne it and carried it away. In His own body He bore it on the tree. The transgressions of His people were made to meet upon His devoted person—those five wounds tell what He suffered, that marred countenance bears the tokens of His inward grief, and that cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" indicates to us, as far as we are able to understand it,

what He endured when He stood in the sinner's stead, the sin-bearer and the sacrifice.

When the Lord enables the soul to perceive that Christ stood in its stead, then the work of appropriating the justification is going on. Christ died, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God," for He, "made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." He was, "made a curse for us: as it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." Christ has once suffered for sin and this is the foundation of our peace.

The point wherein faith comes into contact with pardon is when faith believes that the Son of God did come and stand in the sinner's stead and when faith accepts that substitution as a glorious gift of grace and rests in it, and says, "Now I see how God is just and smites Christ in my stead. Seeing He condemned me before I had personally sinned, because of Adam's sin, I see how He can absolve me, though I have no righteousness, because of Christ's righteousness. In another did I fall and in another do I rise. By one Adam I was destroyed, by another Adam am I restored. I see it. I leap for joy as I see it and I accept it as from the Lord."

This is not quite all, for now here stands the guilty one who has acknowledged the sentence and he has seen the sentence executed upon another. What then? *He takes his place as no longer liable to that sentence*. The penalty cannot be exacted twice. It was neither in accord with human or divine righteousness that two individuals should be punished for the same offense unless both were guilty. When God devised the plan of substitution, the full penalty demanded of the guiltless surety was clearly intended to bring exemption to the guilty sinners. That Jesus should suffer vicariously and yet those for whom He paid the penalty in drops of blood should obtain no acquittal could not be. When God laid sin upon Christ, it must have been in the intent of His heart that He would never lay it on those for whom Christ died. So then, there stands the man who was once guilty, but he is no more condemned because another has taken upon Him the condemnation to which he was exposed. Still more, inasmuch as the Lord Jesus Christ came voluntarily under the law, obeyed the law, fulfilled the law, and made it honorable according to the infinite purpose and will of God; the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer. While Christ stands in the sinner's place, the believing sinner stands in Christ's place. As the Lord looked upon Christ as though He had been a sinner, though He was not a sinner, and dealt with Him as such, so now the Lord looks upon the believing sinner as though he were righteous, though indeed he has no righteousness of his own. And He loves him and delights in his perfect comeliness, regarding him as covered with the mantle of his Redeemer's righteousness and as having neither spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing.

This is wonderful doctrine, but it is the doctrine of the Word of God. It is the doctrine whereon faith can feed and rest. And when faith receives it, she says to the soul, "Soul, you are free from sin, for Christ has borne your sin in His own body on the tree. Soul, you are righteous before God, for the righteousness of Christ is yours by imputation." Without any works of your own, you are yet justified according to the righteousness of

faith, even as faithful Abraham of whom it is written, "He believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness." This is a wonderful exchange, the putting of Christ where the sinner was and of the sinner where Christ was. And now, what does the court say? The court says, "Not guilty. Absolved. Acquitted." And what is the condition of the man towards God? Why, he can say—

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

NOW do I love the Lord and I know that the Lord loves me."

By this process we have come to the truth before God and we have dealt with each other on the line of truth. There has been no fabrication or falsehood. Justice has been vindicated, mercy has been magnified, and we are justly forgiven. Strange fusion of vehement grace and vindictive wrath! Behold how judgment and mercy have linked hands together in the person of the dying, bleeding, rising Son of God. This is the way by which we obtain justification.

The soul may well have a settled peace when it has realized and received such a justification as this, seeing it is a peace consistent with justice. The Lord has not winked at sin. He has not treated sin as if it were a trifle. The Lord has punished transgression and iniquity. The rod has been made to fall and the blessed shoulders of our Lord have been made to smart under the infliction. If justice had never been satisfied, the human conscience would not have been content. The proclamation of unconditional mercy would never have satisfied a human mind. If we had to preach to you that God forgave you irrespectively of atonement, no awakened conscience would welcome the tidings. We would still have to confront the question, "Where is justice, then?" We should be unable to see how the law could be vindicated or the moral government of God maintained. We are quite at rest when we see that there is as much justice as there is mercy in the forgiveness of a believing soul and that God is as glorious in holiness when He passes by sin as He would have been if He had cast the whole race into the abyss of unfathomable woe.

Nor need there be any morbid apprehension as to whether all the evidence that could be produced against us at our trial has been brought forward. Nobody can come in and say "Though you have been exonerated upon a partial trial, upon a more searching investigation your guilt could have been proven." We can reply, "But it was proven." There was the best of evidence to prove it, for we confessed it. There was no other evidence needed and nothing further could have been brought since we pleaded guilty to every charge. If you bring any further accusation, we can only say that we pleaded guilty without reserve. It was all in the indictment—we did not attempt, for a moment, to cloak or conceal any guilt we had incurred. We confessed it all before the Lord and admitted to it—but since the Lord Jesus Christ took it all, there is no cause for reopening the proceedings. There cannot be a second trial through a writ of error—the case is thoroughly disposed of—the prisoner has pleaded guilty to the capital charge and has borne the utmost penalty of the law by his Sub-

stitute, which penalty God Himself has accepted. His acquittal is such as he can rest upon with implicit reliance.

Moreover we know that, being justified, we are now at peace with God because there cannot be any more demands made against us. All that was against us, Christ took away. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." The death of our great Redeemer has abounding merit in it, seeing that He was the Son of God. All the transgressions and iniquities that could ever be raked up against us were all laid to His charge and His atonement, by one offering, has put an end to them all. We are not afraid, therefore, that anything fresh will be raised against us.

Again, our acquittal is certified beyond all questions and the certificate is always producible. Somebody might say to a prisoner, "How do you know that you were acquitted?" He cannot produce any writing. On the record of the court it stands, and yet perhaps he has no means of access to the court record. But beloved, you and I have a writ of acquittal which is always visible. Faith can see it tonight. "What is that?" you ask. It is the risen Christ, for Jesus Christ, "died for our sins and rose again for our justification." You all know how that was. He was cast into the prison of the grave until it had been certified that our liabilities were fully discharged and—

"If Jesus never had paid the debt
He never had been at freedom set."

He was our hostage and His body was held in imprisonment till it was certified that there was no further claim against any one of His people. That done, He rose again from the dead for our justification. He is at the Father's right hand and He could not be there if any of our iniquity remained on Him. He took our sins but He has our sins no longer, for on the cross He discharged and annihilated them all so that they ceased to be—and He has gone into glory as the representative and the Substitute of His people, cleared from their imputed liabilities—clean delivered from anything that could be brought against Him on their account. So long as we see the Lord Jesus sitting on the throne of glory, we may boldly ask, "Who is he that condemns? Christ has died, yes rather, has risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." We know our justification to be forever complete and beyond challenge, for Jesus keeps the place of acceptance for us.

And lastly, on this point, it was a justification from the very highest court. You know how it is in law—a matter may be decided in your favor, but there is an appeal to a higher court—and such are the glorious uncertainties of law that a sentence which has been confirmed in several courts may, after all, be reversed when it comes before the highest authorities. But you and I pleaded guilty *before God*. There is no higher authority than that of God Himself. When Jesus stood in our stead, *we* did not put Him there—nor did He put Himself there—it was the act and deed of the eternal Father. Is it not written—"The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"? It is not only true as a matter of personal faith that—

"I lay my sins on Jesus,"

but as a matter of fact of a far earlier date the Lord laid them on Him. There is no higher authority than the Lord's and therefore do we cry, "It is God that justifies, who is he that condemns?" We have been taken into the highest court of all and there we have been cleared through Jesus' blood—have we not cause to be fully at peace with God—"being justified by faith"? Precious doctrine! Oh, to rest in it with a childlike confidence from now on and for evermore!

II. I now come to the second part of the subject, which is this. Faith brings us into the state of peace which I have explained and afterwards FAITH GIVES US THE SENSE OF PEACE. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God."

Will you please notice that the sense of peace follows upon the state of peace. We do not get peace before we are justified; neither is peace a means of justification; no, brethren, we are first justified. "While we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." God justifies the ungodly. We have no peace till that is done. There may seem to be peace, but it is a horrible peace—the peace of death and of daring presumption. It is the peace when a man says, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace and talks about rest when he has a conscience seared as with a hot iron—and a mind drugged with presumption so that he sleeps that awful sleep which is the presage of waking up in hell. From such peace may God deliver us! But real peace—the peace of God—and peace with God must spring out of our being justified in the way which I have been trying to describe. The man who is justified according to the text has, at this moment, a sense of peace with God, but this is only true of those who are justified by faith.

Here I want you to observe—for every word is instructive—that we have peace with God, "through Jesus Christ our Lord." Many children of God lose their peace, in a measure, and part of the reason of it is because they begin to deal with God absolutely. None of us will ever experience true peace with God except through Jesus Christ. I like that strong expression of Luther, bald and bare as it is, when in commenting on the Epistle to the Galatians, he says, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God." If you have anything to do with God absolutely, you will be destroyed. There cannot be any point of contact between absolute deity and fallen humanity except through Jesus Christ, the appointed Mediator. That is God's door—all else is a wall of fire. You can, by Christ, approach the Lord, but this is the only bridge across the gulf.

Whenever you, dear soul, begin to deal with God according to your own experience, according to your own frames and feelings, or even according to the exercises of your own faith—unless that faith keeps its eye on Christ—you will lose your peace. Stand out of Christ and what a wretched creature you are! Have you attempted to approach the eternal King without His chosen Ambassador? How presumptuous is your attempt! The throne of divine sovereignty is terrible apart from the redeeming blood. Peace with God must come to us by the way of the cross. Through our Lord Jesus Christ we gain it and through Him we keep it.

There are some among you who, I trust, are really believers in Christ who are constantly prone to fret and say, "I have no lasting peace. I am a

believer in Jesus and I have a measure of peace at times, but I do not enjoy fullness of peace." Well, now, we must look at this a little and the more closely we inspect it, the more convinced we shall be that peace is the right of every believer. What is there now between him and God? Sin is forgiven. What is more, righteousness is imputed. He is the object of eternal love. He is more than that—he is the object of divine pleasure. God sees him in His Son and loves him. Why should he not be at peace? "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God," said Jesus, "believe also in Me." Christian, there is no ground of quarrel between you and your heavenly Father. God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you. To you the Lord virtually says, "Come now and let us reason together, though your sins are as scarlet, I have made them as wool. Though they are red like crimson, I have already made them as snow." When He says, "They shall be," He is speaking to the sinner, but to you they *are* so. You are justified. Why have you not peace, then? You have a claim to it and you ought to enjoy it. What is the reason why you do not possess it? I will tell you. It is your unbelief. You are justified by faith, remember. And it is by faith that you obtain peace with God—when you are doubting and fearing instead of simply believing—when you are questioning and grumbling—then it is that you lose your peace. But in proportion as your faith stands, so will your peace with God abide.

I feel certain that the text tells us that every justified man has peace with God—and if so, why is it that I hear poor souls crying, "I believe, but I do not enjoy peace"? I think I can tell you why it is. You make a mistake as to what this peace is. You say, "I am so dreadfully tempted. Sometimes I am drawn this way and sometimes the other and the devil never lets me alone." Listen. Did you ever read in the Bible that you were to have peace with the devil? Look at the text—"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace *with God."* That is a very different thing from having peace with Satan. If the devil were to let you alone and never tempt you, I should begin to think that you belonged to him for he is kind to his own in his own way for a while. He has a way of whispering soft things into their ears and then with dulcet notes and siren songs he lures them to eternal destruction. But he worries with a malicious joy those whom he cannot destroy, for in their case he has great wrath, knowing that his time is short. He expects to see you soon in heaven, out of gunshot of him and so he makes the best of his opportunities to try, if he can, to distress and injure you while you are here. You will soon be so far above him that you will not be able to hear the hell-dog bark and so he snaps at you now to see if he can hurt you, as once he did your Master when he wounded His heel. You never had a promise of being at peace with the prince of darkness, but there is another promise which is far better. It is this—"The Lord shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." A bruise it shall be when we have him under our feet—we will triumph like our Master in the breaking of his head. Till then, depend upon it, the enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman will continue and there will be no truce to the war.

Do I hear another tried one saying, "Alas, it is not the devil, it is myself that I fear. I feel the flesh revolting and rebelling. Lusts that I thought

were slain have a terrible resurrection. When I would do good, evil is present with me. Sin assails me with all awful power by reason of the weakness of my spirit and the strength of my flesh, and I cry, 'O wretched man that I am!'" Listen again. Did the Lord ever promise that you should have peace with the flesh? Oh no, the moment you were converted there began a battle between the flesh and the spirit—and that battle will last till that flesh of yours shall lie low in the dust from where it came and your spirit, delivered from its bondage, shall ascend to God. You must not suppose that as long as you are in this body, the flesh will help you. Ah no, you will cry with Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" You are harassed and hampered by the rising corruption of your nature and it will still rise. Your brethren will still say of you, "What will you see in the Shulamite? As it was the company of two armies." The flesh is striving against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh—and though the lion shall one day lie down with the lamb, the flesh will never agree with the spirit. As the Lord has war with Amalek forever and ever, so there is war between the spirit and the flesh so long as the two are in the same man. There is no promise of peace with the flesh, then, but we have peace with God.

"Ah," says another, "I have little peace, for I am surrounded by those that vex me. When I serve the Lord they malign and misrepresent me with scoff and slander. They take up an evil report against me. Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech that I dwell in the tents of Kedar. My soul is among lions, even among them that are set on the fire of hell. They give me no rest." Yes, but I smile as I think of it. Did you ever dream of having peace with the wicked? Peace with such as turn aside to their crooked ways? Peace with the workers of iniquity? Vain thought! Peace in this world where your Lord was crucified? Peace with those that hate you for His sake? Why, did He not say to you at the first, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." What! Do you expect to wear a crown of gold where Jesus wore a crown of thorns? The confessors and martyrs of ancient times never reckoned upon peace with the world. Nor did the apostle Paul, for he said, "The world is crucified to me, and I unto the world." You have no promise of the world's love, but you have a promise of this sort, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." "And this is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith." I pray you, then, do not misconstrue the text. It does not say that you shall either have peace with the devil, or peace with the flesh, or peace with the world—but it does say that you have peace with God, which is infinitely better.

"Still," says one, "I find that I sin every day and I hate myself for sinning. I cannot get to my bed at night but I feel grieved in my soul that I am not more like Christ and that I cannot grow in grace as I desire. I do not seem to make the advance in the divine life that I hoped I would and I am full of sin. Whatever I do is stained with defilement. Wherever I go, I

seem to fall one way or another into something that wounds my conscience and hurts me." Yes and the Lord never said that you should have peace with sin. I am delighted to find that sin stings you and that you hate it—the more hatred of sin the better. A sin-hating soul is a God-loving soul. If sin never distresses you, then God has never favored you. Unless you hate sin, you do not love holiness, and if you hate sin, you cannot have any peace with it. You will never be satisfied till you are perfect—and when will you be perfect? Why, when you wake up in your Lord's likeness. That will be the hour of your perfection, but till then sin will vex you. Then shall you have no Canaanite to harass you and there shall be war with Amalek no more, when the last enemy is slain, when sin is extirpated, and you shall be near and like your God. You have no promise of peace with sin, nor need you wish for one, for you have peace with God.

To come back again to what is promised and indeed to what is not only promised but really bestowed and communicated to us—"Being justified by faith, *we have peace with God*."

Most assuredly we do enjoy peace with God in this respect—*that we know He loves u*s. He would not have given His Son to die for us if He had not. He would not have devised this matchless plan of justification if He had not loved us. Moreover, we feel a fervent love to Him in return. We do not love Him as we wish to do, nor as we hope to do, but we do love Him for all that. We can say, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You."—

"Yes, I love You and adore,
Oh for grace to love You more."

Of the excellence and virtue of this peace we have daily, hourly proof, for *we are now not afraid to go to our covenant God* for all necessary things and to seek His face for help in time of trouble. Why, to some of us this resorting to God has become so habitual that we speak with Him every hour of the day. Nothing happens but we fly to Him for counsel or for succor. We no longer ask leave to do so, for He has given to us the private key and the perpetual permit of access. We have not always such settled peace with our fellow creatures, for at times we so much lack of confidence in them that we could not divulge to them our troubles—but we have peace with God. We have such an amity that we can always have recourse to Him, assured of His sympathy and His readiness to come to our relief in every time of need. Our habit of prayer proves that we have peace with God—we would not think of praying to Him if we believed that He was our adversary or if we doubted His good-will. If we felt any enmity in our hearts to Him we should not go to Him as we do, with a childlike hope in time of distress.

This peace with God makes us *delight in Him*. I am sure that every soul here that has been justified by faith delights in God. You do not always feel Him equally near, but when He is near it is the joy of your spirit. What are the best and happiest moments you ever know? Are they not those in which you have communion with God? What days can you reflect upon with the greatest satisfaction and ardently wish to have repeated? Are they not those in which His majesty and mercy have been so

revealed to your spirit that with mingled awe and sweetness you have realized intensely His power and His presence! Oh, what a good God He is! Bad as we are, how good He is. Now, take care that you indulge this delight often. If you delight in anything else, you will be an idolater. And remember, He has said, "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desire of your heart." You cannot be too delighted with your God. Is He not perfection itself? Are we not, in all respects, rejoiced to have such a God? We would not have one attribute changed nor one appointment of His sovereign will in the least degree moved from its order. Let Him be as He is and do as He pleases and our souls shall delight in Him. "Yes, though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Now, when you can delight in God, though you cannot delight in yourself, it shows that you have peace with Him and are justified.

Then, brethren, this peace also shows itself in our *acquiescing in all that He does in His rough providence*s. You know that a hypocrite is like a strange dog that will follow a man as long as he casts him a bone or a bit of meat. But a true believer is like a man's own dog that will follow him when he gives him nothing and even when he deals him a cuff or a blow. A true believer says, "Shall I receive good from the hand of the Lord and shall I not also receive evil? If He chastens me, I would sooner be chastened by my Father than I would be caressed by Satan." It would be better to smart till one were black and blue under the rod of God, than to be set upon a high throne by the world or the devil. When he offers you the kingdoms of this world, be sure that you say to the foul fiend, "Get you behind me." But when the Lord hands you the bitter cup, be sure to say, "Your will be done," and take it cheerfully at His hands. If we feel an agreement with our Lord's will, it shows that we are at peace with Him.

One more evidence of being at peace with God is when you can, *with confidence, look forward to the time of your departure out of this world* and say, "I can die, if You, O Lord, are with me." When you can fall in with the words of the hymn we were singing just now—

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who anything to my charge shall lay?
While through Your blood absolved I am,
From sin's tremendous curse and shame?"

We are not afraid of the Day of Judgment because we have peace with God and therefore we are not afraid to die.

There is concord and harmony between the righteous God and His redeemed people and fear is banished. He has given us His Spirit to dwell in our hearts and now we desire that each rising wish may be prompted by His will. Our mind is agreed with the mind of God. He wishes us to be holy and we wish to be holy. He would kill sin in us and we long to have it killed. He wishes us to obey and we desire to obey. He would have us seek His glory and we desire that He should be glorified in us, in our whole spirit, soul, and body. The lines of our life run parallel with the life of God, though upon a lower level—we can never be as He is in the glory of His nature, but we desire to be holy as He is holy. The life within us is divine, for we have been begotten again by Himself and from now on we are in Christ and Christ in us—and so we are at peace with God.

Go your way, my brethren, and swim in this peace. Bathe your weary souls in seas of heavenly rest until you come to the place where not a wave of trouble shall ever roll across your peaceful breasts and may the very God of peace sanctify you wholly and preserve you blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calls you, who also will do it. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 5.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—775, 397, 708.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR FRIENDS—The sermon is so long that only a line or so is left for me. I will say the less of myself. The warm sunny days which I have spent in this retreat are, by God's blessing, bringing back to me health and strength. I shall be happy indeed if my mental and spiritual vigor should also be renewed by the removal of the daily care which pressed upon me. If it is so, my hearers shall be the gainers, for all my strength has been and always shall be laid out in my ministry.

I am right glad to hear that special services are commencing at the Tabernacle and I entreat all the brethren there to throw all their energies into them. Pray that the Holy Spirit may work mightily and glorify the Lord Jesus in the midst of the congregations. And then set to work to fetch in the people from the outside. Gather them! Gather them from hedges and highways and crowd the gospel feast. The preachers are among you whom God has widely blest, but how can they benefit the people if they do not come to hear them? Make the services known and press those to come who do not usually attend public worship. We long to see souls saved—do we not? My heart cannot be content while men are being lost. I cannot be among the crowds to preach, but my inmost soul prays for those who are indulged with that privilege and for you also who have the joy of helping in the work of the Lord.

I am bound to thank those generous friends who continue to send aid to the various works under my care—the Lord reward them. To each and all my hearers and readers I send my hearty Christian salutations,

C. H. SPURGEON
MENTONE

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SEEKERS DIRECTED AND ENCOURAGED
NO. 1457A

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

"And you shall seek Me and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart."
Jeremiah 29:13.

THIS was a part of the direction, which God gave by His servant to the captives in Babylon. They were to remain quiet in Babylon until the set time came for their deliverance and then there would be granted to them a gracious visitation from God, which would move them to repentance and incite them to prayer. Then might they be quite sure that the time had come for their deliverance, when they sought the Lord with their whole heart. It is a general principle that a blessing is about to come from the All-Merciful One when we are moved to pray for it with all our heart. The Lord of grace may send us blessings before we search for them, for He is a sovereign and often far outstrips what we might have expected, but His promise runs, "Seek and you shall find it," and it is with the promise that we have most to do. A cheering assurance is given to those who seek in hearty earnest and to this requirement of heartiness we must give earnest need.

At this time I shall not attempt instruction, but strive to drive home the truth into the heart and conscience. I pray the Holy Spirit to help me and I ask the prayers of those who have power with God that the Word may be as a goad to waken, bestir, and urge onward those upon whom it is used.

Our address will be, first, to the *unconverted.* Secondly, *to backsliders*. And thirdly, *to this church* or any other Christian people.

I. And first TO THE UNCONVERTED. Our text has a word for you. "You shall seek Me, and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart" You have lost your God—you are at a distance from Him. Your sins have separated you from your Maker and nothing will ever be right with you—really right—till you get back to your God. You are a sheep away from its shepherd; you are a prodigal son away from his father and you will never be right, I say, till, as a sheep, you get back to the fold, and as a son that has rebelled, you are reconciled to your Father.

You need your God and you will never be right till you find Him. You are therefore stirred up by the text to "search for" Him. You are not to sit still with folded arms and say, "He will come if He will." The prodigal said, "I will arise and go to my father," and some such spirit must be in you or we cannot hope well of you. You must search after the Lord.

In this search it will be of no use for you to look within your heart, for it is empty and void of anything godlike and altogether estranged from God. Expect not to find the remedy in the disease. No one turns to his empty purse in the hope that it will supply his necessities, for poverty is not the source of riches. It were vain to look for the living among the dead, therefore look not for grace and salvation in yourself. Neither will it be the path of wisdom to endeavor to perform good works of your own, hoping to set yourself right by your own exertions in gaining merit. Man, the whole mischief is that you are separated from God and you must get back to Him. The best works done while you are at enmity with your Lord and King are only part and parcel of the proud, presumptuous sin which rejects the Savior and sets up itself in His place. It would have been quite right for the prodigal to wash himself and cease from feeding the swine. It was most desirable that he should leave the harlots and the riotous living in which he had indulged, but if he had done all that and nothing more the great mischief would not have been cured, for the radical evil lay in his being away from his father's house. That is the essential wrong in your case, O unconverted man, unconverted woman. You will never be perfectly happy and right till you are reconciled to God.

You are allowed to search for Him and what a privilege that is. When Adam sinned, he could not go back to Paradise, for with a flaming sword in his hand there stood the armed cherub to keep the way that he might not touch the Tree of Life. But God, as far as the garden of His mercy is concerned, has moved that fiery sentinel and Jesus Christ has set angels of love to welcome you at mercy's gate. You may come to God, for God has come to you. He has taken upon Himself your nature and His name is Emmanuel, God with Us. Yes, the Infinite became a man and He that built yonder arch of heaven and hung it with those starry lamps, came down below to be subject to lowly parents, to work in a carpenter's shop, and to die upon a felon's gallows, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Search for Him and you must find Him, for so stands His own word, "You shall seek Me and find Me."

The text, however, demands that our searching after God should be done with all our heart. There are several ways of seeking God which must prove failures. One is to seek Him *with no heart at all.* This is done by those who take their book and read prayers, never thinking what they

say, or who attend a dissenting place of worship, and hear another person pray, but never join in it. This is done by those who bend the knees at eventide and mutter pious words, but never think—who rise in the morning and repeat sacred sentences and never consider—who with regard to divine things are as little thoughtful as if the gospel were all a legend or an old wives' fable, not worth an hour's meditation. I have seen young women sometimes when I have been traveling, reading those trashy novels which they purchase at the railway stall. And I have seen them waste their tears on some imaginary heroine or hero and yet they and others hear about the majesty and the love of God without emotion and read of heaven and hell—and Christ and God—with scarcely a tear or a thought. Dear friend, you will never find the Lord if you seek Him in a heartless, unthinking manner. God is not mocked. If any of you have fallen into a formal religion and seek the Lord without your heart, your seeking is in vain.

Some seek God *with a false heart*. They flame with zeal and would have their friends know it, for they say as Jehu did to Jehonadab, "Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord." But their heart is not true towards God. Their piety is an affectation of feeling and not deep soul-work. It is sentimentality and not the engraving of God's Spirit upon the heart. Beware of a false religious excitement—of being borne up with religious gas as some are, inflated like balloons by a revival, only to burst by-and-by when they need something to support them. God grant us to be saved from a lie in the heart, for it is a deadly canker, fatal to all hope of finding the Lord.

Some seek Him, too, *with a double heart*—a heart *and a heart,* as the Hebrew puts it. They have a heart towards God and they have a heart towards sin—they have a heart towards the pardon, but they have also a heart towards the transgression. They would gladly serve God and mammon. They would build an altar for Jehovah and still keep Dagon in his place. If your heart is divided, you will be found lacking. Those prayers will never get to heaven which only fly upward with one wing. If one oar pulls towards earth and the other towards heaven, the boat of the soul will revolve in a circle of folly and never reach the happy shore. Beware of a double heart.

And some seek God *with half a heart*. They have a little concern and are not altogether indifferent. They think when they pray or read or sing, but the thought is not very intense. Superficial in all things, the seed is sown in stony ground and soon it is withered away, because there is no depth of earth. The Lord save us from this.

Now, you that are seeking Christ, remember that if you would find Him you must neither seek Him without heart, nor with a false heart, nor with a double heart, nor with a half heart, but "You shall find Me," says the Lord, "when you shall search for Me with *all* your heart."

Nobody gets on in the world who is half-hearted. If a man needs money, he must hunt for it morning, noon, and night. If a man longs for knowledge, he cannot take a book and ladle it into his brain with a spoon—he must read and study if he is to be a scholar. If a man desires to rise in such an age as this, he cannot do it without stern labor. Great discoverers, eminent artists, and powerful orators have all been men of hard work. Handel, who composed such majestic music, practiced so often on his harpsichord that he hollowed out the keys like spoons through his constant use of them. Nothing is to be done without earnestness and you may not expect that God is to be found, pardon is to be received, and grace to be had while you have only one eye open and are not half awakened out of sleep. What did Jesus say?—"The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force." Heaven's celestial bastions must be stormed by downright persistence. You must take the knocker of heaven's gate and not drop it from your fingers with a dainty tap, but hammer at mercy's door again and again till you make the infernal deeps of despair resound with your desperate knocks and cause heaven itself to echo with your hopeful determination that you will enter in or know the reason why. Oh, knock and knock and knock and knock again, for the door shall be opened when you knock with all your hearts. Surely, dear friends, if any men have reasons to bring their whole hearts into action, you unconverted people are the people. I am sure that if I were to intimate to you that a hundred pounds of gunpowder were stowed away in yonder center seat and the probability was that it would soon explode, you would not remain very long in this Tabernacle, but would hurry out with all your heart. But any destruction that could be caused by gunpowder, as far as its effects on earth are concerned, could be nothing at all as compared with the overwhelming destruction which will come upon body and soul to men who are under the wrath of God. That wrath of God abides on every one of you who are not converted. God is angry with the sinner every day and if it is so, your position is the most perilous one conceivable. You will soon die. Do not be vexed with my reminding you of it. We are compelled to see it, some of us, who watch large congregations. Never does the same assembly meet in this place twice and I suppose between Sabbath and Sabbath it happens almost invariably that some hearer goes to his account. Certainly, in this church we lose all the year round more than one per week of our friends. It is true, then, that you

will soon have to die—how will you bear to close your eyes on all mortal things without a hope of immortal joy? To go before the dread tribunal of your Maker and your Redeemer unwashed in the precious blood—with all your sins from the first day of your life until now about your neck like millstones—to sink forever—how can you bear it? Think of this and if you do, you will have good reason for seeking your God with all your heart. Remember also that after death comes judgment. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. And after the judgment comes the final award, which to those who have rejected Christ will be eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power. Do not, I pray you, defy the wrath of God or dare His infinite displeasure. He Himself has said it, "Beware you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver." Surely every man in his senses who knows that he is exposed to such an imminent risk as this will, with his whole heart, seek unto the Lord.

But why is it that when men search with all their heart they find God? I will tell you. The only way in which we can find God is in Jesus Christ. There He meets with men, but nowhere else, and to get to Jesus Christ there is nothing on earth to be done but simply to believe in Him. It is a matter which does not take a moment. Believe God's testimony about Jesus Christ—trust yourself with Jesus Christ and salvation is yours. The saving word is near you, in your mouth, and in your heart, and that is why when men seek the Lord with their whole hearts they find Him, for before they called, the Lord was ready to answer. Jesus was always ready, but other wishes and other thoughts made the seeker unready. Sins were there and lusts of the flesh and all manner of obstacles to hinder the man. When a man comes to seek God with all his heart, he lets those things go and soon sees Jesus. Then, too, a man becomes teachable, for when a man is in earnest to escape from danger he is glad enough to be told by anybody. If I had lost my way and feared I might fall over a precipice, I should be glad for the tiniest child to tell me the right road and a man is likely to learn who is willing to be taught. This seeking God with all his heart makes a man quick in understanding. Before, he was a dolt, because his heart was not in it, like a boy at school who does not want to learn. When a man seeks God with all his heart, you do not need to preach fine sermons to him—he does not crave elegance or eloquence—no, tell Him Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that "there is life for a look at the crucified one," and he jumps at it. "That is what I want," he says.

The Spirit of God has made him eager to learn and so he catches at once at the blessed message and believes in Jesus. Half a heart, or no

heart, or a double heart will not see what is as plain as a pikestaff and will not accept a gospel which is as glorious to God as it is simple to man. I charge you, then, you that seek the Lord, to be whole-hearted in it, for you cannot expect peace and joy in the Holy Spirit till all those straggling affections and wandering desires are tied up into one bundle and your entire being is eager in the search for God in Christ Jesus.

II. I cannot spare the seeker any more time, for I need to have five minutes with THE BACKSLIDER. Backsliders, you have left your Lord. Perhaps you have left the church or the church has left you by putting you outside its pale and deservedly so, because you were a dishonor to it. I am glad you come among us to worship. You have had to be cut off from our fellowship because of your sad conduct, but you still stick to us and I am glad to see you. I always feel hope for you as long as you love the old house. I am glad that though you are not recognized as a child in it, and do not feel that you ought to be, yet you still wait under the window to hear the family sing. When the children of God are feasting together at the Table I have marked you looking on and wishing you were again in the happy household. I do not know whether you are God's children or not. I cannot judge your hearts. I call you backsliders, not because I am sure you are really so, for it is very possible that you made a false profession and you afterwards did what was natural you should do—you broke down in trying to carry out a practical lie. I will not try to judge that, but I will say this to you—surely, if there are any people in the world who ought to be whole-hearted in seeking after God, you are the people. If I am to be lost, I pray God I may not perish as an apostate or a backslider. O you who once made a profession of religion, I cannot understand how you can dare to think of the judgment day, for you will not be able to plead ignorance, for you knew the truth of God and professed to believe it. You will not be able to say, "I never heard of these things." No, but you came to the communion table and you joined the church. You even preached to others or you taught in the Sunday school. You ran over at the mouth about divine things though you were empty at the heart. How speechless you will stand at the last dreadful day with your old regimentals hanging about you to prove that you were deserters! You will not be able to lift a finger or utter a word in defense of yourself. And what will you do when you go down to hell? The prophet represents the king of Babylon as going there and as he descended the little petty princes whom he put to death, who were lying there in their dungeons in the prison of hell, rose and leaning on their elbows, looked at him and said, "Have you become like one of us?" I think I hear the drunkard rising up and saying to you, "What? And are you here after all? You used to

preach sobriety to me and warn me of the drunk's doom." Ah, my hearers, hypocrites are damned as well as drunkards. Then will speak the woman whom you talked about reclaiming and what a sneer she will meet you with and say, "You needed a refuge yourself, you hypocrite!" Then, too, will speak your neighbors who never went to a place of worship, whom you thought were so very bad because you went there and forgot what you heard. They will say, "This is what came of your going to the Tabernacle and hearing Spurgeon! Is this the result of your joining the church and going to the communion table?" What answer can you give when those eyes shall leer on you and those lips shall hiss in derision at you? Others shall say, "I never had the opportunities you had. I was never warned as you were. I never rejected Christ as you have done—I never stained the robes of His church and wounded Him anew in the house of His friends as you have done." Then they will insult and triumph over you. If a prince of the blood were sent to a common jail, what a misery it would be to him. I pity every man who has to work upon the treadmill, so far as he can deserve pity, but most of all the man who has been delicately brought up and scarcely knows what labor means, for it must be hard indeed for him. Ah, you delicate sons and daughters of Zion—you whose mouths were never stained with a curse and whose hands have never been defiled with outward sin—if your hearts are not right with God, you must take your place with the profane and share with them. What do you say to all this? Do you say, "I would gladly return and find acceptance in Christ"? To you the text expressly speaks. Then shall you "find Me when you shall search for Me with all your heart."

III. My last word is to you, my brethren in Christ, and especially TO you, the members of this church. Thus says the Lord, "You shall seek Me and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart." Brethren, we need the Lord to be always among us. We have had His presence very graciously, but I am always troubled lest any sin of ours should cause Him to depart. I dread anything like a decline in zeal, ardor, generosity, prayerfulness and holy living among any of us, lest the glory should depart and Ichabod be written on our walls. We hunger for our God, for I trust we can say we love Him.

Can you say that? I heard this last week a story about that mighty preacher, Robert Hall, which touched me as I heard it. A friend related that Robert Hall was riding one day through a little hamlet on his way to preach at a country town. It snowed very heavily and Mr. Hall was passing through the village, unaware of the state of the road beyond. A Christian man who knew him well, cried out, "Mr. Hall, you must not go far-

ther. The snow is very deep. You cannot get through it, you must come in." Mr. Hall stopped at the house and rested awhile. He looked out of the window and saw that it kept on snowing. He looked out again and it snowed more heavily than before and his friend said to him, "You cannot go, Mr. Hall, you cannot get there." "But," he said, "Sir, I must go." "Sir," said the good man, "you cannot. It is impossible. You cannot get to the place; the roads are blocked up." So the great preacher agreed to remain if he could deliver his sermon. "I must preach, sir; I must preach, sir. I cannot remain unless I preach." His host went round the hamlet, knocked at the doors of the cottages, and got a few people together into his home. Mr. Hall preached a wonderful sermon. The good man seemed to mount to heaven in preaching from the words, "I saw no temple therein." When the people had gone home he said to his friend, "My dear sir, I am afraid I am not a child of God." "Why, Mr. Hall, how can you say such a thing as that?" "But I am afraid I am a hypocrite, sir." "Well, nobody else is afraid of that about you, Mr. Hall. And I cannot think how you can give way to such a notion." "Ah, but I want to ask you a question, sir. What do you think is a sure sign that a man is a child of God?" "Mr. Hall," said the good man, "you ought to know better than I do. I cannot undertake to instruct you." "I need to know, sir, and shall be obliged by your judgment," said Mr. Hall. "Well," said the man, "this is what I think is a sure sign—if a man really *loves* God, he must be a child of God and there must have been a change in Him." "Thank you, sir. Thank you, sir, for that word," said Mr. Hall, "that is just what I needed. Love God, sir? I love Him with my whole soul." "And," said the good host, in talking to my friend, "you should have heard how Mr. Hall went on about God. It was wonderful to hear him, sir. He praised Him above all things. He said all that was good about Him and he kept saying, 'I cannot help loving such a being as God is and if that proves that I am saved, then I am sure of it, for I must love Him.'" Now, my brethren, we love God with all our hearts and therefore we desire to have Him glorified in our midst. Do you not, my brethren, vehemently desire this? I know you do. How, then, shall the Lord be honored? He may be glorified by holier living. How is that to be done? The text says we shall find Him if we seek Him with all our hearts and in finding Him we shall find holiness. I have given up the idea that I shall ever get a church in which all hearts will seek God earnestly. I know you will not all be alive and full of fervor, for some of you are a dishonor to the church. You will never help us, but you will remain among us as dead weights. How I wish I could hope otherwise, but I dare not deceive myself or you. I do expect, however, that all who have the life of God really in their souls will give their whole hearts to the glory of God

and will do it intensely. I look to them to seek the Lord by prayer, praying much for God to be glorified and to back up their prayer by effort, cheerfully seeking to take their full share in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Brethren, did Christ die for you? Yes or no? If He did, then, in the name of common honesty, live unto Him, for you cannot be your own—He has bought you with a price. When you were baptized in the name of The Sacred Three, did you mean it? If you did, in the name of the truth, live unto God, for you confessed that you were dead to the world and buried with Christ and that you should always live unto Him. When the last time you came to the communion table, did you really believe that Jesus gave Himself for you and did you know that you feasted upon His flesh and drank His blood by faith? Then, I say, in the name of both honesty and truth, live as souls should live who have eaten better than angels' meat and have Christ within them.

I try to speak as earnestly as I can, but usually when I reach my home I say to myself, "What are you doing? You did not awaken those people or yourself either. You are getting dull and old—you are not half so zealous as you used to be in your younger days." I try to stick big pins into myself in a spiritual fashion, to wake myself up again for fear I should fall into the same drowsy state as some I know of, whose preaching is little better than articulate snoring. They are sound asleep and as a natural consequence their people are asleep, too. If this Book is true, the most of us are not living as we ought to live. If there is a heaven, we are not living in the joy which the hope of it ought to inspire. If there is a hell and some of our own children are going down to it, we do not act towards them as if we believed in their danger. We are acting like monsters and not like men if we suffer our fellow creatures to be lost without lifting a finger for their salvation. Awake! Arise, my brethren! Oh, church of God in this place and church of God everywhere, shake yourself from the bonds of your neck. Arise and sit down on your throne of power, O daughter of Zion. Put on your strength as in the ancient days, for strength shall be yours if you search after the Lord with all your heart. God grant that as a church we may be thoroughly earnest in seeking for a display of His saving power and He shall have the glory. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 11.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—429, 503, 549.

TO MY CHURCH AND PEOPLE:

DEAR FRIENDS—I am hoping and praying that the special services at the Tabernacle may excel all that have gone before. To urge you to the utmost earnestness about them, I have written the short sermon of this week. It would give me great joy to hear, as I feel sure I shall, that in this as in all the other works of the church, you are abundantly filled with zeal and constancy. My one concern is lest the Lord's work should suffer by my absence. I entreat you, do not permit it to be so in any point or degree.

The damp and dull weather, which has reached us even here, has somewhat retarded my progress to health and strength, so that I remain a very feeble traveler, but yet I am greatly improved and feel that my mind and spirits are the better for the rest. To all of you, from the bottom of my heart, I send my sincere love in Christ Jesus.

Yours to serve while there remains any life in me,

C.H. SPURGEON,

Mentone, February 6, 1879.

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THE NUMBERED PEOPLE
1457B

WRITTEN AT MENTONE,
BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"According to the commandment of the Lord they were numbered by the hand of Moses, everyone according to his service and according to his burden: thus were they numbered by him, as the Lord commanded Moses." Numbers 4:49.

ISRAEL in the wilderness is admitted, in some respects, to have been a type of the Church in its present condition. The tribe of Levi was, in a peculiar and inner sense, the type of that peculiar people who under the great High Priest are set apart for the service of the Lord and His Church. To them the transport of the holy vessels from place to place was committed, each family of the tribe being made responsible for the safe and reverent transport of a certain part of the sacred furniture. Since nothing in the service of the God of order may be left to hazard, but everything is in order, those persons who in hackneyed phrase cry out against, "system," ought to be told that the Lord has *always* had a system, not only in Nature and Providence, but also in His own courts.

There is an admirable "economy" in the palace of the great King—whatever of disorder, waste and riot there may be surrounding other monarchs—nothing of the kind will be found beneath the shadow of the Divine Throne. He who counts the stars and calls them all by their names, leaves nothing unarranged in His own service. His Church, therefore, should exhibit the discipline of an army and all His warriors should know how to keep rank. Though we are not under the Law, we are not without Law to Christ, nor do we wish to be, for His commandments are not grievous. At this season, when our Church is making a most earnest effort to glorify the Lord by seeking conversions, we would muster all the servants of our Master and summon each one to take his appointed place and service.

The work of the Lord is to be done, done well and done by us all most cheerfully and heartily. Gather, therefore, together and let each redeemed one take up his burden and bear it before the Lord in due order! To this end, like Moses, we would call you out, one by one, and give you a charge as from the Lord. Our text contains *authority for the muster roll, appointment for the individuals and account of the actual execution of the command.* Upon each of these, an *absent officer* of your company will try to say a little as the Holy Spirit may enable him.

I. Here is, first, AUTHORITY FOR THE MUSTER ROLL. "According to the commandment of the Lord they were numbered." It was not left to Moses to number the people without Divine sanction, else the deed might have been as evil in the sight of the Lord as that of David when he made a census of the nation. Neither may any man at this day number the saints of the Lord, at his own discretion, to enterprises for which they were never set apart. The armies of Israel are none of ours to lead where we will, nor

even to reckon up that the number may be told to our own honor. The counting of Apostles and disciples is lawful enough, for it was frequently done in the best days of the Church, but statistics may be taken in such a spirit as to be the occasion of sin.

In no such manner would we now number the host unto the battle, but would summon the chosen of the Lord to the Lord's work and in the Lord's name. Believers in Christ Jesus, you are now called forth to do suit and service, because, like the tribe of Levi, *you are the Lord's.* He views you as the Church of the firstborn, as the redeemed from among men and as His peculiar portion and inheritance and, therefore above all other men you are under His special rule and governance. The Lord said unto Moses, "The Levites shall be Mine: I am the Lord," and He has made the same declaration concerning all those that fear the Lord and that think upon His name—"They shall be Mine, says the Lord, in the day when I make up My jewels."

Upon whom shall we call to perform the work of the Lord but upon those who are His own? To these belong a devout care for the interest of true religion and an earnest zeal for the Glory of God. Obligations as powerful as they are, are honorable upon them. "You are not your own, you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Do you feel a shrinking from being numbered and called out for active service? Is not this an evil and unworthy sensation? Should you not far rather account it your *glory* to be called out with the dedicated ones?

Brothers and Sisters, you are further called because *this is a charge laid upon you of the Lord*, to whom you specially belong. The Levites (Num. 4:3) were ordained "to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation." They were not numbered with the rest of the nation, for their vocation was altogether different and their whole business was "about holy things." You see in this, your calling, Brethren, for you are also ordained that you may live unto the Lord alone. To whom does the work of God belong but to His children? Who should serve the Lord Christ and gather in His wanderers but those whom He has called to that office? If you refuse the honorable yoke, how will the work of mercy be done? Can it be left to hirelings, or will the spiritually dead perform the service of the living God? No, it is your charge and you must do it.

Again, Brethren, the Lord may well call you to this service, seeing *He has given you to His Son*, even as He gave the Levites to Aaron, as it is written (Num. 3:9), "They are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel." The Lord had also said, "Bring the tribe of Levi near and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him." They were happy, thus, to serve the head of their own tribe and more happy, still, are we to serve the Lord Christ who is the Firstborn among many Brethren. Because you belong to Christ, therefore, hide not yourselves from His service, but come forward with joy!

Once more, *the Lord has constituted you the servants of all His people*, even as He said of the Levites that they were to "do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation." We are debtors to all our Brethren and we are their servants to the full extent of our power. The greater we are in the Church, the more are we the servants of all! It is

ours to fulfill this service, or else we are untrue to the position of Christians who are all called in love to serve one another. Here are a few of the claims which the Lord has upon you—will you not acknowledge the supreme authority which calls you to active service?

II. Under our second head we shall notice the APPOINTMENT OF THE INDIVIDUALS—"Everyone according to his service and according to his burden." By our varied gifts, positions, offices and opportunities, we are as much set apart to special services as were the sons of Kohath, Gershon and Merari. One family bore the ark and the other the holy vessels; another had charge of the sacred hangings and a third carried the boards and the pillars and framework of the tabernacle. But supreme authority had set each family its own special service and burden. Even thus is it among ourselves and so let us see to it that we observe the Divine appointment.

"Having, then, gifts differing according to the Grace that is given to us, whether ministry let us wait on our ministry, or he that teaches, on teaching; or he that exhorts, on exhortation: he that gives, let him do it with simplicity. He that rules, with diligence; he that shows mercy, with cheerfulness." Great evils arise out of persons mistaking their calling and undertaking things of which they are not capable. And, on the other hand, the success of Christian work, in a large measure, arises out of places of usefulness being filled by the right men. In the march through the wilderness the sons of Merari never interfered with the burdens of the sons of Kohath, or the arrangements would have been sadly disturbed—each one took up his allotted load and went on his way rejoicing, no one jostling his fellow.

If we could bring all our workers into the same order, how like an army with banners would the Church become and how beautiful would be her battle array! "A place for everyone and every one in his place" should be the practical slogan of our congregations and the people should be numbered, not according to worldly rank or self-estimate, but, "everyone according to his service." It is to be noticed, here, that the Levites only rendered this service, "from thirty years old and upward, even unto fifty years old."

We rejoice that it is not so among us under the Gospel, for there is work for the young people and also for the aged! Little children and young men and maidens may take their places among the servitors of the Prince of Peace! And he who leans upon his staff for very age shall not find himself dismissed from his Master's beloved service. No women are mentioned as bearers of the tabernacle and its holy furniture. It was a work for which they were scarcely fitted and an economy under which they were seldom employed. Here, too, we have a great change, for there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus—and in their own way, the Sisters are our fellow servants, even as they are our fellow heirs. Never can women be forgotten in any enumeration of the forces of the Church! What could we do without them?

Let it not be forgotten, then, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, calls out *all* His redeemed to His service and that He lays upon each one a burden which no one else can carry. It should be the joy of each Believer to know what it is that his shoulders are permitted to

bear and then he or she should gladly take up the ennobling load. There can be no exemption unless a man will dare to claim that he is his own and was never bought with a price. Each one throughout life must be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

III. Thirdly, our text is the summary of the chapter in which we have an ACCOUNT OF THE ACTUAL FULFILLMENT OF THE LORD'S COMMAND BY MOSES. He numbered each family and cast up the total of the tribe, at the same time mentioning in detail the peculiar service of each. We would imitate him at this important moment and take the census of those who are consecrated to the Lord's own service. Where are you, then, who can bear the heavier service of the sanctuary, carrying its pillars and the boards and the sockets? You are now needed to speak in the meetings, to lead the people in prayer, to order the assemblies and to take the heavier work of this holy business!

The Lord Jesus should have able men to speak for Him—He deserves the best of the best. Now is the hour, where is the man? Let no diffidence or love of ease keep one back who might make known the Gospel and win a soul for Jesus! By the curse of Meroz when they came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty, we would charge all Christians of influence and ability to hasten to the field! But where are you who can only carry the pins and the cords? Your burden is lighter, but probably your strength is also less—and lighter though your load may be, the matters which you carry are quite as essential as the pillars and the boards! Where are you?

You who can say a few words to lonely enquiring ones; you who can do no more than pray, where are you? At your posts, or idling? Answer and answer quickly, for time and need are pressing! If the load which you can carry is so very small, be all the more ready to bear it. Are you a lover of the Lord Jesus and do you wish to be omitted from the roll call? If so, let it be known to yourself and stated plainly to your conscience—do not pretend to be a laborer and remain a loiterer—but openly avow to your soul that you stand all the day idle and feel fully justified in so doing! Deny your Lord His due, but do it to His face! Tell Him openly that you do not mean to spend your days in glorifying His name!

Do you shrink from this honest refusal of service? You need not do so because it is at all unusual, for as Nabal said, "there are many servants, nowadays, that break away, every man from his master." It is plain, however, that you have no stomach for so clear a rejection of your Lord. Come, then, and take your place among those who are striving together to honor their Lord! At this time your help will be precious. Seek a new anointing and then hasten to the work. Is not the Holy Spirit in you? Does He not prompt you to seek the salvation of others? Is not the Lord Jesus the Model to which Grace conforms you? How can this be if you have little or no love for the souls of your neighbors?

Your pastor calls you, though far away! By all our mutual love he beseeches you to fulfill your ministry, every one according to his service and according to his burden. But, far above this, your God, your Savior, your Comforter call you with one voice! Can you refuse the heavenly vocation?

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A SERMON UPON ONE NOTHING BY ANOTHER NOTHING
NO. 1458

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

"Though I am nothing."
2 Corinthians 12:11.

THE divine discipline had succeeded well with the apostle Paul. There was danger of his being exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelation which he received and therefore there was given him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him—this trial fully answered its purpose and Paul remained a lowly-minded servant of Jesus Christ. His humility comes out in the incident before us. He was compelled to defend himself and prove his apostleship and this he does very thoroughly but very modestly. In the midst of strong expressions of self-assertion, every one of them truthful and none of them exaggerated, his true humility is as manifest as if he had been unveiling his inward faults or writing his "Confessions." Augustine in his "Retractations" is no more humble than Paul in his self-vindication. It is easy for a man to use lowly expressions when he is writing about his own faults and the grace of God which saved him from them, but it is not so easy to maintain the virgin blush of modesty when called in necessary self-defense to vindicate one's own character and mention one's own achievements. Indignation is generally awakened in such a case and humility creeps out of the way—the more amazing is it then to find Paul esteeming himself as nothing, even when answering the cruel depreciations of his opposers. Read verse 11 and see the lowly heart of the man, "I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing." Beloved, when we have to take the same medicine, may it have as sure an effect upon us as it had upon Paul. If it should be necessary for us to be buffeted or to endure a thorn in the flesh, may the affliction be as much sanctified to its end as it was in his case. Alas, I am afraid that some have many thorns in the flesh and yet are not humble. They have many buffetings and yet are lifted up and what is worse still, they have never enjoyed a perilous abundance of revelation to lift them up, but rather they have been surfeited with an abundance of that which is gross and earthy and yet they are not humble. Though they have no good thing to glory in, they have exalted themselves above their brethren and have spoken harshly of them and to them and have been exceedingly high and haughty in all that they have done. Such persons may expect to be stopped in their boasting before long. May God grant that a little thorn may be enough for us; that one touch of the knife may suffice to let out our proud blood; that a little buffeting by the messenger of Satan may avail to prevent our being exalted above measure, for has not the Lord

said, "Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle"? A little trial ought to suffice to ballast us, for I am sure we have nothing so abundant in the way of revelations and spiritual attainments that we should feel inclined at all to boasting. It is a great shame if we have fallen into the danger which Paul escaped and have fallen into it without rhyme or reason. He who is proud about nothing is a fool in capitals.

I desire to call your attention to the fact that although Paul was undoubtedly humble and the discipline of God had helped to keep him so, yet there is not a particle of cant in any of his expressions. There is no trace of the whine of hypocrites revealing rather than concealing their self-conceit. Humility has been well defined as having a just estimate of yourself. There is no humility in such self-depreciation as would lead you to deny what God has worked in you or worked by you—that might be willful falsehood and certainly would be grievous error. Falsehood is not a constituent element of anything that is gracious—we are not required to call five talents one in order to be humble. If we make a fair and just estimate of ourselves, we shall certainly discover nothing to boast about and we shall not then be likely to borrow from the lips of others words and confessions which do not accurately represent our character or state our feelings and ought not therefore to be employed by us. The mimicry of humility is a very common piece of masquerading. You shall find persons speaking in very lowly terms of themselves, but they do not expect you to believe them. A brother who has called himself worldly in prayer, if you should tell him in private conversation that you were glad to hear his truthful description of himself, would not take it at all kindly, but would ask who and what are you that you should judge him. He would tell you he is as spiritual as you are and perhaps more so. A monk we remember confessed that he was so great a sinner that he had broken all the commandments. But when afterwards one of his friends began to charge him with breaking first one commandment and then another, the hypocrite averted that he had not broken any one of them. Men are so little humble that when they smite on their breasts they may be still boasting in their hearts. Mock humility creeps around us, cringing and fawning, but every honest man loathes it and we may be sure that God loathes it, too. Now, if the apostle had said that he was not an apostle at all, that he had never suffered anything for Christ, or done anything to spread the gospel, he would have been speaking, as some say, humbly. But this is a mistake—he would have been telling lies. He, therefore, does nothing of the kind. He says that he is not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles; speaks of his sufferings and his toils; told of the manifestations of divine grace to his soul and yet for all that, he finishes his detail of experience by saying, "Though I am nothing." Brethren, do not deny what God has done for you or by you. Look at all of it and value it and bless the Lord for it. But still, when all is said and done you must, no, I trust you cheerfully will come back to this, "Though I am nothing"—speaking truthfully all the while and not using a good expression for a sort of religious fashion's sake, but because it is deeply felt to be quite as true that you are nothing as it is true that God has blessed you.

I shall endeavor at this time, as the Spirit of God shall help me, to speak upon this very remarkable expression of the apostle, "Though I am nothing." O, that both the preacher and his hearers may be able to enter into the spirit and soul of the text and make it all our own.

I. And first, we shall say of it that this was OTHER MEN'S ESTIMATE OF HIM. Everyone did not value the great apostle as we do, but many spoke ill of him. Perhaps he meant, "Though I am nothing in the opinion of my detractors." I hardly think he intended it, but still he may have included that in its meaning. He may have meant, "I am not a whit behind the most eminent of the apostles, though in the judgment of others I am nothing." I mention this point, first, because it may comfort any earnest servant of God who is faithfully serving his Master but finds himself undervalued and despised by those from whom he expected sympathy and help.

You may be starting in the Christian life as a young man full of zeal and fervor, but you dwell among a people who count you hot-headed and self-conceited and do their best to thwart you. You are like Joseph among his brothers and the archers sorely shoot at you. You are looked upon as a dreamer and a pretentious fool. Your companions are as rough to you as were David's brothers when he came down to the host—they charge you with pride and willfulness. Be comforted about this trial if you are indeed a true-hearted soldier of Jesus Christ, for if Paul heard that in the judgment of many his personal presence was weak and his speech was contemptible—and if many other eminent men have been frowned upon and misjudged—you need not wonder if the same thing happens to you. It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth—bear it and profit by it.

The case is harder with older servants of God. After a long life of usefulness, churches often forget all that a man was and did in his vigorous times and now that the elasticity of his mind has abated, they treat him with indifference. His ministry is now more solid and full of experiential teaching—an ungenerous race of hearers does not say that his preaching has become weighty, but they complain that the old gentleman is "very heavy" and they cannot endure his prosiness. The good old man, who deserves to be honored by his congregation, runs the risk of being elbowed out and reckoned as a worn-out nobody. You must not marvel, my dear brother, if foolish lovers of novelty should so treat you. It is inexcusable and yet it is common. It wounds your heart and makes you wish to be gone to the better land, but do not let it too sorely vex you, for the same thing happened to him at whose feet you would be glad to sit—I mean the apostle of the Gentiles—who, when he was "such a one as Paul the aged," knew that to many he was nothing.

In following up the subject, we observe that Paul was nothing, first, *in the estimation of hatred*. His Jewish brethren, when he was with them the slave of their prejudices and an advocate of their principles, thought him some great one. He was a leader among them, a Pharisee among the Pharisees, a man deeply taught in rabbinical lore, a scholar to be gloried in, a zealot to be trusted. Then Paul was something. But when he went over to the hated sect and became a worshipper of the Nazarene, he was nothing. The bigot spat at the very mention of his name. He was an apos-

tate, a worthless fellow, a madman, a nothing. He became an alien and worse, a castaway and a curse. Such is, in a measure, the case when men become thoroughly and bravely followers of Jesus. The world's market price of them falls a hundred per cent. If a scientific man is of infidel principles, he is cried up as an eminent thinker and discoverer. But should he be a true Christian and know 20 times as much as his fellows, he is a person of antiquated views and narrow notions. If a preacher proclaims novel heresies, then he is declared a man of advanced thought, a leader abreast of the times—though indeed there may be nothing in him but an affectation of singularity and lack of reverence for the Word of God.

He who is content with the exceeding broadness of the divine testimony and asks no greater liberty than that of the truth, is in certain quarters reported to have narrowed his soul and to be possessed of but slender intellect. Of course, it has always been so, but I think it is easier to call a man a fool than to prove him to be so and it is a great deal easier to boast of your own wonderful powers, the expansiveness of your mind, and the great progress that you have made in thought, than it will be to convince really thoughtful and experienced men who walk with God that, after all, the new is better than the old and that the inventions of man's fancy are better than the doctrines of divine revelation. That is, however, the custom of men who, being short of arguments, seize upon the weapons of contempt. If you are not of their way of thinking, you are not a thinker at all. If you will chime in with their notions, you are worthy of all honor. But if yon differ from them, you must be nothing. Paul was marked at zero by the measurement of those who hated him.

He was also *nothing in the valuation of envy*. There arose, even in the church of Christ, certain ones who loved pre-eminence and found the apostle already in the highest place. False brethren claimed to be apostles and in order to maintain their pretensions they questioned the apostleship of Paul. They strove to rise by pulling down one who was superior to themselves. Who was Paul? they asked. He could write a weighty and powerful letter, but if you came to listen to him, his weak eyes, his short stature, and his cramped resolve to know nothing but Christ crucified caused him to make a sorry figure as an orator. They, themselves, with enticing words and fair speeches, boasted that they far excelled him. Where was the excellence of his words? Where was the depth of his wisdom? He was nothing and they sneered at him and exalted themselves. The apostle knew all this and was by no means crushed thereby for he could stand even before envy. Ah, brethren, envy has a wonderful skill in the cruel arts of slander and detraction—if the envious cannot quench the sun, they can at least point to its spots or raise a dust to blind men's eyes to its brightness. Many a hero of the truth has been despised for the very reason which ought to have secured him honor. It is an unfortunate thing for some men, if they love their own ease, that they have risen to conspicuous usefulness, for in a middle place they might have been allowed to be something, but jealousy is now resolved to rate them as nothing. If Paul had wanted to be comfortable and repose had been his objective, he had only to subside into the common ranks of the lukewarm Laodiceans and then he would have been far less

plucked at. Zeal and holiness, if they are accompanied with a measure of success, will secure a man that contempt among the envious which is the homage that evil hearts must of necessity pay to goodness.

Again, the apostle was evidently *nothing to those who desired that Christianity should make a fair show in the flesh.* Certain brethren had come among the believers who brought with them human wisdom and thought to adorn the doctrine of Christ and cause the offense of the cross to cease. Gnosticism was the "modern thought" of the apostle's age and of the era which followed it. It was a translation of the gospel into the language of the schools and the evaporation of its true life and meaning in the process. Our apostle abhorred the wisdom of words. "We use," says he, "great plainness of speech." He tore the mask from off those half heathens who made the cross of Christ of no effect by their philosophizing and therefore they retaliated by declaring that he was not a man of a great mind—that in fact he was nothing. Other teachers arose who were opposed to the philosophical way, but they must take the way of tradition and ritualism, declaring that men must be circumcised or else their faith in Christ would be of no avail. Such persons dwelt much upon the observance of holy days and months and so on and thus stirred up the spirit of the apostle till he came forth and cried, "I, Paul, say unto you, that if you are circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." By declaring the plain gospel of salvation by grace through faith, he laid the axe at the root of all ritualism, as he had before done at the root of all rationalism. Straightway the high churchmen discovered that Paul was nothing. He might have decorated the gospel with learning and made it palatable to the Greeks or he might have cramped it with tradition and made it agreeable to the Jews, but he scorned to do either. When Peter went a little in the Jewish direction, Paul "withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed" and therefore some cried up Cephas, but cried down Paul and according to their account he was just nothing.

May the Lord grant to all of us who preach the gospel a willingness to be lightly esteemed; may the Lord give us all divine grace to be fools in the estimation of modern wise men. May we have enough backbone of holy firmness to be conservative of the old truth and to be careless of the ridicule of the worldly wise. May we have enough loyalty to Christ to be willing to be despised for His sake. May we be man enough not to care one atom whether we are in honor or dishonor, so long as our conscience is clear that we have faithfully preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The day shall come when he who has borne the most disgrace for Christ will be esteemed the happiest and most honored man alive—and when he who was counted the greatest fool for Christ shall be acknowledged to be among the wisest of men and shall shine as the stars forever and ever. Will we not cheerfully consent to be nothing for His sake who made Himself of no reputation for our sakes? Will we not, with John, rejoice that He must increase and that we must decrease? It is our joy to see Him all in all and if any shame or contempt borne by us could lift up His name but one hair's breadth, we would rejoice with joy unspeakable. After all, what is man's opinion? The balances are not those of the sanctuary and the weights are not those of justice. The verdict of earth will be reversed

by the judgment of heaven, for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. When any measure of injustice grieves us, we should console ourselves with the remembrance that so persecuted they the prophets that were before us and yet the prophets have lost no real honor. They also despised our Master and yet His throne has lost none of its glory.

Thus have we discussed a meaning which some have seen in the text and if it is not the first sense of it, at any rate it is a truth which may be profitably remembered.

II. But now, secondly, we have here in the words of the apostle HIS OWN ESTIMATE OF HIMSELF. "Though I am nothing." Our first observation upon the apostle's valuation of himself is that it is *a very great correction upon his original estimate of himself*, for in former days he carried a high sail and would by no means lower his flag to any man. When he was on the road to Damascus to hunt the saints, he was on first-class terms with himself and thought that he was doing God a great service. He was somebody then, both good and great, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee. You might have ridden many a mile to find his equal. Saul was like his namesake of old, head and shoulders above all others. But Paul was of quite a different stature—short and even diminutive. I refer, of course, to his height in his own esteem, He would not, then, have claimed that he was nothing, for he was a student of the law and a great deal more besides.

This corrected estimate very much resulted from the enlightenment which he received at his conversion. What a flood of light does the Lord pour in upon a man's soul when he brings him to Himself. At first it almost blinds him, so that like Paul, he admits, "I could not see for the brightness of that light." It was so in my own case. I had often been down into the cellar of my heart and I rather admired the purity and order of the place. It seemed to me to be elaborate and decorated and it boasted a good share of vegetation and a considerable life of its own. A dim, flickering light sufficed to show me, as I thought, that it was by no means a very foul place, but rather the reverse. I could not be so vain as to say that I thought it absolutely perfect in cleanliness and beauty, but still it was as well as could be expected and far better than the most of other hearts. Now, it was ordained that this flattering illusion should be dispelled. One day, as I went into this vault, there came one with a larger candle than I had been known to carry and what I saw surprised me beyond measure. I saw that the festoons which I imagined to be special decorations were huge cobwebs heavy with dust. The vegetation, too, I saw was all blanched and much of it a noxious growth, while the life which I had somewhat boasted of, I was ashamed to look upon or even to think of. That candle shining in the cellar of my soul had worked a melancholy change in my thoughts of myself and foolishly I resolved never to permit so bright a light to enter there again as if to hide the evil was to remove it. But things could not remain as they were, for one day there came another who did me a worse, yet better turn, for He descended into my cellar and removed certain shutters which had long excluded the light of day. When next I entered the vault I was ready to swoon for very flight, for a dunghill was sweetness to it—it was the concentration of

abominations. There were all manner of creeping things, loathsome and polluting. I was ready to die at the sight. But, to tell the truth, I did not even then see it all, for the window was still so much covered over with thick cobwebs and filth that the whole of the light did not enter. Yes, I fear I have not even yet seen all the pollution of my nature, but I thank God I have seen enough to make me cry to Him who is able to cleanse. Hercules turned a river into the Augean stable and purified it and my Lord Jesus has, with His own blood, purged my nature—but this I know, I am nothing—less than nothing in my natural state.

I have but given you a parable of what the apostle saw in himself when the law came with its condemning power into his soul. During those three days in which the scales were on his eyes and he was blind, not seeing the sun for a season, he turned all his sight within and saw himself. Then great Saul dwarfed into little Paul and the learned rabbi shriveled into a poor brother who was glad to receive humble Ananias and to learn from him what he was yet to do. He who hectored over the church of God now meekly arose and was baptized, calling upon the name of the Lord. Three days of glorious light, so bright that it made him blind, had corrected his estimate of himself—and it was in memory of that lesson and of all that he had learned subsequently that he said, "Though I am nothing."

Beloved friends, *the force of that estimate had increased by a growing belief in the doctrines of grace*. If you wish to find the free will of man very much extolled, you must not read in the epistles of Paul. If any of you desire to write an essay upon the dignity of human nature or to preach a sermon upon the glory which still remains in man despite his fallen state—the recuperative power of human nature despite its disease—you will gain little help from our apostle. I could refer you to certain modern divines for a good deal of stuff of that kind, but the apostle of the Gentiles does not deal in that material. His indictment against humanity in the first chapter of Romans is as terrible as it is true. "Dead in trespasses and sins" is his description of man's condition—sovereign grace is his only remedy. He tells us of being born again and of being newly created by the work of God. He tells us of justification by faith through grace by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, but he has not a word to say of human power or merit. If ever a man could say, "Grace! Grace!" and did say it and kept on saying it most distinctly, it was the apostle Paul. In proportion as he learned the fullness, freeness, richness, and sovereignty of divine grace did he see, side by side with it, the nakedness, the filthiness, the nothingness of man, and so he who could best glory in the grace of God thought less and less of himself and said, "Though I am nothing."

In addition to this *his own internal experience had very much helped him to feel that he was nothing*, for he had experienced great spiritual struggles. "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" was not once or twice his cry, but he often felt the law of his old nature struggling against the law of his mind and he lived in lifelong conflict with the evil which he saw within himself, therefore feeling daily that salvation must be of grace alone and that he himself was nothing and less than nothing.

Beloved, I feel sure that when the apostle said that he was nothing, he meant that he was *nothing in comparison with his Lord*. He had seen the glory of His Master up yonder in heaven and he had preached that glory among the sons of men and as for himself, he could not find any figure to represent his own insignificance. The smallest of figures was too large for him. He dared not describe himself by the figure one and so he put down a zero and declared, "I am *nothing."* When a man's heart is filled with adoring reverence of the Redeemer, he shrinks into nothing and feels a kind of self-annihilation passing over his spirit. And if you have never seen the Lord, but only heard of Him, you may aim at humility, but when your eyes see Him, and then will you *have* it, for you will abhor yourself in dust and ashes. Our apostle had in the fullest sense seen the Lord and for that reason with emphasis, he cried, "Though I am nothing."

He meant, next, that he was *nothing to boast of*—that albeit he had been a night and a day in the deep and had been stoned and had been beaten with rods, and had been a faithful sufferer for Christ—albeit that he had preached the gospel in the regions beyond, not building upon another man's foundation, yet in all these he saw nothing whatever of which he could boast, but he was still nothing. I remember well a talkative Christian who supposed herself to possess very remarkable attainments, very much of the same character as those who swarmed around us a few months ago, people who were of very superfine hot-pressed quality. I wish them every blessing, but I am not at all enamored of their pretensions, wonderful as they are. Now, this superior person was talking of the marvelous things which she had felt, known, and done. She was, if not quite perfect, in remarkable danger of becoming so. She turned to an aged Christian in the company and said, "But you, dear brother, do not say a word." Now, you know there are individuals who say little, who *think* all the more and our old friend was one of them, but still remained silent. "Come," she said, "have you no religious experience?" The old man said very quietly, "I never had any to boast about." That remark I heartily endorsed. If we attain to the highest experience and rise very near to God and conquer open sin we shall still have to look within and say, "I am nothing." Boasting is a sure sign of failure wherever it is found—even a giant like Goliath had hardly done boasting before he fell beneath the sling and stone of a ruddy youth. Restrain every feeling of pride. No, chase it from your soul, for it is foolish and will lead to further folly. It is a noxious insect which will corrupt whatever it lights upon, gaudy though its wings may be. King Herod was soon eaten of worms when he began to be blown up with pride. Where there is the most precious grace, there is always a jewel-case of humility to keep it in. Gilded wood may float, but an ingot of gold will sink. Diotrephes was a nobody and loved the pre-eminence. Paul was not a whit behind the chief of the apostles, yet he said, "Though I am nothing." If we reach the apostle's point of conscious nothingness we had better stop there, for there is no place safer and happier and none more consistent with the facts of the case. Those who are lowly, are excellent, but pride is pestilent. The possession of grace secures a measure of self-deprecation and in proportion as that grace increases, the thermometer of self-estimation will fall.

Below zero is the proper point for us—for in truth we are less than the least of all the saints.

The apostle meant, next, that he was *nothing to trust in*. "Though I am nothing." We begin our Christian life by trusting in Christ alone and we shall continue so to trust as to His merit. But we are very apt to get wrong in other matters. We begin with a sense of being very weak and foolish and we look to Jesus only for strength and guidance. But after a while we think ourselves growing into deeply experienced and well-instructed Christians and the temptation is to lean somewhat to our own understanding and stability. All this comes of evil and will lead to further evil. I recollect well a person asking a brother of my acquaintance to lend him a certain sum of money. My friend was willing to do this, but the man added, "You know you can trust me. I have been a Christian now 35 years and I am past temptation." My friend, like a wise man, buttoned his pocket very quietly and said he must decline to make him a loan. He had intended to do so till that vainglorious speech was made. That boaster failed the next day and was discovered to have been an errant rogue. Whenever a man says, "I am past temptation," he reveals the pride of his heart. And whenever any of us even dream of such a thing about ourselves, we have need to tremble for fear that some terrible fall is near. Yet that thought does come across us, though we do not utter it—we half think in our hearts that those inexperienced young men may go wrong, but that we who are middle-aged men are not so likely to be overthrown; but grievous sins in churches are as common among the more advanced as among the young. Most, if not all, of the great falls recorded in the Bible happened to middle-aged and old people. Think of the drunkenness of Noah and of Lot and the sin of Reuben, Judah, David, and Peter and you will see that these were not hot-headed boys, but experienced men who should have acted better.

We must come to this—I am nothing—I am strong in the Lord when He strengthens me, but I am as weak as an infant without His aid. I may know a great many things as the Lord continues to teach me, but if His grace were removed I should be as foolish and ignorant as when I first came into His school. "In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwells no good thing." Within my nature there is no stay for my confidence. I am nothing to trust in.

"Though I am nothing," again, means this—*I am nothing worth considering*—as if he said, "If there is any good thing for me to do, I never calculate whether I shall be a loser by it or a gainer, for I am not worth taking into the account. If Christ's kingdom will but come, it does not matter whether Paul lives or Paul dies. I am nothing in comparison with His glory." I think he meant this also, "I am of small consequence. Christ's kingdom will go on without me. Souls will be won without me. His glory will be promoted in the world even if I am no more alive to work for His cause. I do not count myself to be a person of such consequence to His church that the Lord needs me. He may use me, but if He does not use me, He will use somebody else. I am but a pen and He can produce many such. If He does not write with one, He can write with another—I am nothing. If I am now a trumpet in His hand, He can blow through another if He chooses to lay me aside, for rams' horns are common enough and

the walls of Jericho will not stand for lack of them." I think that was what he meant by, "Though I am nothing." I pray God we may make a low estimate of ourselves and never dream ourselves to be essential to God's cause.

I shall yet spend a few minutes more in speaking of our own estimate of ourselves, dear brethren, and may we all be made by divine grace to say, "Though I am nothing." I will tell you why I wish that we may come to this. It is because it will be exceedingly beneficial to us if with deep sincerity we feel that we are nothing. It will prevent pride and that which will prevent pride is worth a fortune. It will prevent our being mortified, as we sometimes are, because notice is not taken of us when we have done something that we thought was greatly praiseworthy. If we say, "Though I am nothing," we do not expect people to talk much about a nothing, nor do we wish them to do so—we are glad to get into the shade and if we do not receive a single word of commendation we are content to have worked for the Lord in quietness. No man will look for honor among his fellows when he acknowledges that he is nothing.

This humility will also prevent severe censures of others. We are all very handy at picking holes in our brethren's coats, but when we are nothing we shall draw back our hand and say, "It does not become a nothing and a nobody to be finding fault with other people." I sometimes wish that those who criticize ministers would think of this. I do not believe that a public person can nowadays say five plain words which some critic or other will not misunderstand or misrepresent. I wish they would try to speak or write themselves and see whether others could not pull them to pieces quite as readily. You will be greatly helped in avoiding censoriousness if you have a lowly view of yourself so as to say, "Though I am nothing."

This will also help you to avoid all self-seeking. Why should you seek your own praise if you are nothing? There is no good in seeking for great things for a nothing. If you are nothing, you will keep your motives clear. You will seek the glory of God and not your own. If you are nothing, self-denial will become very easy to you. You will be willing to be a doormat to God's temple for His saints to wipe their feet upon if you can be more serviceable there than in any other capacity.

A man who feels himself to be nothing will be easily contented. He who is nothing does not need a thousand a year to maintain his dignity. He who is nothing, having food and raiment, is content. It would be a pity to spend a great deal upon nothing so he that is nothing thanks God for what he has and eats his bread and drinks his cup of water and blesses God that he has all that and Jesus Christ, too. Mr. Somebody needs a large estate and a heap of money and when he has that, Mr. Somebody needs much more and is never satisfied. Then, too, he has so many calls that he cannot afford to give anything away, while he who is nothing has his weekly tithe to bring, for he feels himself to be nothing but a steward and must faithfully use his Master's goods.

He who knows himself to be nothing is also full of gratitude. If you catch him alone, you will find the tears in his eyes and if you question him, he will tell you that he was weeping to think that God should ever have loved him, for he is such a nobody. He was wondering at his elec-

tion, marveling that eternal love should have pitched upon him. He was wondering at redemption, admiring that the Lord Jesus Christ should have shed His blood for him. He was wondering at effectual calling, amazed that the Holy Spirit should ever have called him. He was wondering at the persevering love of God, that the Lord's mercy should have endured his ill manners so long. He was wondering that there should be a heaven for him, wondering that there should be eternal life for Him. "Though I am nothing," he says, "yet infinite grace is mine." How can there be all this for a nobody? Great God, how good You are! Is not all this a sweet commendation of a lowly spirit? He that lives in the Valley of Humiliation, among the lilies, dwells where the birds sing all day and the gazelles and the does of the field lie down in peace.

Now, I finish with this one thought. When the apostle says, "Though I am nothing," that word shows that there was a fact in the background. He had been telling us that he was once caught up into the third heaven and had enjoyed a special revelation of Christ. Yes, beloved believers, we have had our banqueting days when the banner over us was love. We have been very near the Beloved and we have been made to drink the spiced wine of His pomegranate and He has manifested Himself to us as He does not unto the world. All this you know, and I also know it, "Though I am nothing."

In addition to this, "The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad," by enabling us to serve His cause. If we have not been stoned and scourged, yet we have borne something for Christ and borne it cheerfully. If we cannot emulate the apostle in abundance of service, yet the Lord has not left us without fruit unto His glory and this we are right glad of, though we heartily add, "Though I am nothing."

We can also believingly say, "Though I am nothing," yet the Spirit of God dwells in me. "Though I am nothing," the Spirit of God uses me. I want you not to forget the background of mercy which sets out this poor noticing and make it look all the less, albeit that it makes it all the sweeter for it to be so little.

Oh, yes, and there is a heaven for me and there is eternal life for me and there are the three persons of the divine Trinity sworn to save me. And heaven and earth may pass away, but I shall never perish, neither shall any pluck me out of Jesus' hands, "Though I am nothing." His angels are commissioned to keep me, and He Himself in covenant has given His oath and promise to preserve me, "Though I am nothing."

"Though I am nothing." Does it not make your soul laugh with inexpressible delight to think that you shall wear a crown of life that fades not away and that your hands shall strike the strings of a harp which shall pour forth immortal melody though you are nothing? My heart dances while I feel that the pearly gates, the streets of gold, the goodly company of angels, and the assembly of the firstborn are for me, "Though I am nothing".

Dearly beloved, go away with "Though I am nothing" in your mouths, but yet say, "Yet has He loved me with an everlasting love and because He has set His love upon me, He will deliver me and set me on high. Since I was precious in His sight I have been honorable and He has loved

me and He gave more than Egypt and Ethiopia for me, 'Though I am nothing.'"

The Lord bless you and if there is a sinner here who is somebody, may the Lord turn him into nobody. But if there is a nobody here, may the Lord bless him, for he is the sort of man that Jesus saves. O soul, you must be nothing if God is to save you. You must come down from your high horse. You must give up your trust in works and ceremonies and natural goodness and be nothing. And when you are nothing, then will Jesus Christ be all in all to you. He is a full Christ for empty sinners. He gives life to dead sinners, healing to sick sinners, and clothing to naked sinners. But if you are full and rich and lively in yourselves, you may go your way—He will have nothing to do with you. If you are nothing. If you are clean emptied out and stripped and done for, ground to powder, crushed, and rendered helpless, you are of those for whom Jesus shed His precious blood. Come, trust in Him and find eternal life.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
2 CORINTHIANS 11:13-33; 12:1-12.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—625, 627.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

BELOVED FRIENDS—Yesterday I was gladdened by a telegram from our well-beloved deacon, Mr. Murrell. "All going well. Tabernacle crowded each service. All friends united and hearty, expecting great results this February." This was more precious to me than a banknote for a large amount. I have no greater joy than to hear that the Lord blesses the work at home.

For myself, as you desire to hear frequently of my welfare, I can only say that the weather here is variable and I have varied with it, but yet I am greatly refreshed and in a fair way to recover strength. I still lean heavily upon my staff and can only totter a short distance, but my spirits are revived and my mind is regaining its tone. Pray for me daily, as I also do for you with all my heart.

Your loving friend,
C.H. SPURGEON
Mentone, February 11, 1879

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

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SATAN'S PUNCTUALITY, POWER AND PURPOSE

NO. 1459A

A SERMON
WRITTEN AT MENTONE,
BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"Then comes the devil, and takes away the Word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved."
Luke 8:12.

IT is a great comfort that such multitudes are willing to hear the Word of God. Even though many should turn out to be as the rock, the way-side, or the thorny ground, still it is a cheering circumstance that the seed can be sown broadcast over so large an acreage. Yet the thoughts excited by the sight of a vast congregation are not all pleasurable—the question most naturally arises—What will come of all this preaching and hearing? Will the heavenly seed produce a harvest or fall on barren soil? The thoughtful Christian, in considering this question, takes into consideration the condition of the persons addressed and remembers that many are unprepared for the gospel. So far from being like a field furrowed to receive the seed, they are like a trodden pathway. They hear the gospel and so far we are hopeful of them, but they have no idea of allowing it to enter their inmost souls. The ground of their hearts is already too much occupied. Other feet will tread there and speedily obliterate the sower's footprints and as for the good seed, it may lie where it falls—entrance into the inner man it can have none. Nor is this all, the anxious observer remembers that there is yet another difficulty—the arch-enemy of God and man is opposed to the salvation of souls and therefore he is present with destructive power wherever the seed of the Word is being sown. It is of this we shall now speak—the activity of Satan during the preaching of the gospel. He is out of sight, but we may not allow him to be out of mind—he does all the more mischief if men sleep. Let us watchfully turn our eyes towards him and prove that we are not ignorant of his devices.

Our divine Lord in the words before us reminded His *hearers of the devil's punctuality*—"*then* comes the devil," *of his power*—"and takes away the Word out of their hearts." And *of his purpos*e, which is the prevention of saving faith—"lest they should believe and be saved." At this time, when special services are being held, it may be well to bring these points clearly forward that all may be warned against the wicked one and so by the grace of God his designs may be frustrated.

I. First observe the evil one's PUNCTUALITY. No sooner does the seed fall than the fowls devour it. Our text says "*then*," that is, *then and there* "comes the devil." Mark renders it, "Satan comes immediately." Whoever else may loiter, Satan never does. No sooner does a camel fall dead in the wilderness than the vultures appear. Not a bird was visible, nor did it seem possible that there could be one within a radius of many miles, yet speedily there are specks in the sky and soon the devourers are gorging themselves with flesh. Even thus do the spirits of evil scent their prey from afar and hasten to their destroying work. The lapse of time might give opportunity for thought and thought might lead to repentance and therefore the enemy hurries to prevent the hearer from considering the truth he has heard. When the gospel has somewhat affected the hearers, so that in some slight degree it is in their hearts, *then* swifter than the flight of the eagle is the haste of the devil to take the Word out of their hearts. A little delay might put the case beyond Satanic power, hence the promptness of diabolic activity. O that we were half as quick and active in the service of our Lord. One half as prompt to seize every opportunity for blessing the souls of men!

No doubt Satan acts at times directly upon the thoughts of men. He personally suggested to Judas the selling of his Master and many another black insinuation has he cast into men's minds. Like the foul vulture which constantly feasted itself upon the vitals of Prometheus, so does the devil tear away the good thoughts which would be the life of a man's soul. Insatiably malicious, he cannot endure that a single divine truth should bless the heart. Fearful blasphemies, lewd imaginations, gross unbeliefs, or vain frivolities the devil casts into the mind like infernal bombshells to destroy any new-born thought which looks toward Christ and salvation. At one time he fascinates the mind and another he terrifies it. His one aim is to distract the man's thoughts from the gospel and prevent its lodging in the conscience and heart.

As Satan cannot be everywhere present at one time, he frequently does his evil work by his servants, sending the inferior spirits to act as fowls in devouring the seed and these again employ various agents. With great cunning are the common incidents of life used in the evil business, so that even by things indifferent in themselves, the purposes of the adversary are brought about. The preacher has some specialty in his manner, utterance, or appearance—and this becomes the bird which devours the seed—the hearer is so taken up with a trifling oddity in the minister that he forgets the truth which was spoken. An anecdote was related, an illustration employed, or a word used which awakened a memory in the hearer's breast and away went the Word out of his heart to make room for mere vanity. Or if the sermon was preserved to its close, it then encountered a fresh peril—a lost umbrella, an extra pressure in the aisle, a foolish jest overheard in the crowd, or the absurd dress of an unknown person— any one of them may answer the devil's purpose and snatch away the Word. Little does it matter whether the seed is devoured by black crows or white doves, by great fowls or little sparrows—if it does not abide in the heart, it cannot bring forth fruit and hence the devil arranges that somehow he will take away the seed at once. If he never visits a place of worship at any other time, he will be sure to be there when a revival has begun—*"then* comes the devil." He lets many a pulpit alone, but when an earnest man begins preaching, "Satan comes *immediately."*

II. Secondly, we will now for a moment notice his POWER. "And takes away the Word out of their hearts." It is not said that he tries to do it, but that he actually does so. He sees, he comes, and he conquers. The Word is there and the devil takes it away as easily as a bird removes a seed from the wayside. Alas, what a sway has the evil one over the human mind and how ineffectual is the preacher's work unless a divine power is put forth with it. Perhaps from the striking manner in which it was stated, a little of the truth abides in the memory, but the enemy takes it quite out of the heart—and so the main part, the all-important part of our work is undone. *We* may be foolish enough to aim at the head only, but he who is crafty beyond all craft deals with the heart. Anyone may win the intellect—if Satan can keep the affections he is quite content. To the man's heart the good seed is lost, the fowls have devoured it. It has become to him nothing, having no power over him, no life in him. Not a trace is left—no more than there would be a mark remaining of seed cast

on the wayside after the birds had taken it away—so effectual is the work of the prince of the power of the air. When Satan thinks it worth his while to come, and come immediately, he means business and he takes care that his errand shall not fail.

His power is partly derived from his natural wisdom. Fallen as he now is, he was once an angel of light and his superlative faculties, though perverted, defiled, and dimmed by the blighting influence of sin, are still vastly superior to those of the human beings upon whom he tries his arts. He is more than a match for preacher and hearer united, if the Holy Spirit is not there to baffle him. He has also acquired fresh cunning by long practice in his accursed business. He knows the human heart better than anyone, except its Maker. For thousands of years he has studied the anatomy of our nature and is conversant with our weaker points. We are all young and inexperienced compared with this ancient tempter—all narrow in our views and limited in our experience compared with this serpent who is more subtle than all the beasts of the field—what wonder that he takes away the Word which is sown in hard hearts.

Moreover, he derives his chief power from the man's condition of soul. It is easy for birds to pick up seed which lies exposed on a hard path. If the soil had been good and the seed had entered it, he would have had far greater difficulty; he might even have been foiled. But a hard heart does the devil's work for him in great measure. He need not use violence or craft—there lies the unreceived Word upon the surface of the soul and he takes it away. The power of the evil one largely springs from our own evil. Let us pray the Lord to renew the heart that the testimony of Jesus may be accepted heartily and may never be taken away. Great is the need for such prayer. Our adversary is no imaginary being, his existence is real, his presence constant, his power immense, his activity indefatigable. Lord, match him and overmatch him. Drive away this foulest of fowls. Break up the soil of the soul and let Your truth truly live and graciously grow within us.

III. Our short sermon closes with the third point, which is the devil's PURPOSE. He is a sound theologian and knows that salvation is by believing in the Lord Jesus and therefore he fears above all things lest men should "believe and be saved." The substance of the gospel lies in those few words, "believe and be saved," and in proportion as Satan hates that gospel, we ought to prize it. He is not so much afraid of works as of faith.

If he can lead men to work, or feel, or do anything in the place of believing, he is content. But it is believing that he dreads, because God has coupled it with being saved. Every hearer should know this and be instructed to turn all his attention to the point which the devil considers to be worthy of his whole activity. If the destroyer labors to prevent the heart's believing, the wise will have their wits about them and regard faith as the one thing needful.

"Lest they should believe and be saved" Satan takes away the Word out of their hearts. Here also is wisdom—wisdom hidden within the enemy's cunning. If the gospel remains in contact with the heart, its tendency is to produce faith. The seed abiding in the soil springs up and brings forth fruit and so will the gospel display its living power if it dwells within the man and therefore the devil hastens to take it away. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit and the devil does not like to see it lie near the sinner for fear it should wound him. He dreads the influence of truth upon the conscience and if he cannot prevent a man's hearing it, he labors to prevent his meditating upon it. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God"—to obliterate that which has been heard is the Satanic method of preventing faith. Here again is a practical word for the ear of prudence—let us keep the gospel as much as possible near the mind of the unconverted—let us sow and sow again, in the hope that some grain may take root. Countrymen were known in planting certain seeds to put in "one for the worm, and one for the crow, and then a third which would surely grow," and we must do the same. In the book of Jeremiah, the Lord describes His own action thus—"I spoke unto you rising up early and speaking, but you heard not; and I called, but you answered not." Surely, if the Lord Himself has thus continued to speak to an unanswering race, we need not murmur if much of our preaching should appear to be in vain. There is life in the seed of the gospel and it will grow if it can be put into the soil of the heart. Let us, therefore, have faith in it and never dream of obtaining a crop except by the old-fashioned way of sowing good seed. The devil evidently hates the Word—let us then keep to it and sow it everywhere.

Reader or hearer, you have often heard the gospel—have you heard it in vain? Then the devil has had more to do with you than you have dreamed. Is the thought a pleasant one? The presence of the devil is defiling and degrading and he has been hovering over you as the birds over

the high-road and lighting upon you to steal away the Word. Think of this. You are missing, by your unbelief, fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ—and instead thereof you are having fellowship with Satan. Is not this horrible? Instead of the Holy Spirit dwelling in you as He dwells in all believers, the prince of darkness is making you his resort, coming and going at his pleasure into your mind. You remember Jacob's dream of a ladder and angels ascending and descending from himself to heaven? Your life experience may be set forth by another ladder which descends into the dark abyss—and up and down its rungs, foul spirits come and go *to yourself!* Does this startle you? The Lord grant it may. Do you desire a change? May the Holy Spirit turn your heart into good ground and then shall the seed of divine grace grow in you and produce faith in the Lord Jesus.

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THE DUAL NATURE AND THE DUEL WITHIN
NO. 1459B

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

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." Romans 7:23.

I QUESTION whether any man understands himself and I am quite certain that no Christian does so. "Great is the mystery of godliness" in more senses than one. The believer is a great riddle to those who observe him—"He is discerned of no man." He is equally an enigma to himself. The frequency of books like Venning's, "Orthodox Paradoxes," and good Ralph Erskine's, "Believer's Riddle," is not at all amazing, for a thousand riddles may be made about the Christian since he is a paradox from beginning to end. As Plato used to say of each man that he was two men, so may we with emphasis say of each Christian that he is two men in one. Oftentimes to himself the evil man within him appears to be uppermost and yet, by the grace of God, he never can be for the ultimate victory belongs to the new and spiritual life. We see in every Christian what was seen in the Shulamite in the Song, "as it was the company of two armies." This is not always known by the believer when he commences the new life. He starts knowing that he is a sinner and that Jesus is his Savior, but as he proceeds he finds that he is more a sinner than he thought he was. Many surprises await him and some things which, if he is not prepared for them, will stagger him as though some strange thing had happened to him. Perhaps my discourse on this subject may prevent a new convert from being overwhelmed with unexpected storms and help him to solve the question which will arise in his mind, "If I were a child of God, could it be thus with me?"

Our first head will be, THERE ARE IN ALL BELIEVERS TWO PRINCIPLES. The apostle speaks of *the law of his mind* and then of *another law in his members* warring against the law of his mind. The converted man is a new man in Christ Jesus, but the old nature remains within him.

The first life in a Christian, in order of time, is *the old Adam nature.* It is there from the first. It is born of and with the flesh and it remains in us after we are born of the Spirit, for the second birth does not destroy in us the products of the first birth. Regeneration brings into us a new and higher principle which is ultimately to destroy the sinful nature, but the old principle still remains and labors to retain its power. Some fancy that the carnal mind is to be improved, gradually tamed, and sanctified—but it is enmity against God and is not reconciled to God—neither indeed can be. The old nature is of the earth, earthy, and must be crucified with Christ and buried with Him, for it is altogether too bad for mending. This old nature lives in our members, that is to say, its nest is the body and it works through the body. There are certain appetites of ours which are perfectly allowable, no, even necessary to existence, but they can be very easily pushed to sinful extremes and then that which is lawful and right becomes a nest for that which is unlawful and wrong. It is a commendable thing that a man should seek to provide for his own household, yet how many crimes and how much covetousness come into the world from an inordinate indulgence of that desire? A man may eat and drink, yet it is through those appetites that a thousand sins are engendered. A man, when he is in his right condition, puts a bit into the mouth of his desires and holds them in as with bit and bridle. His higher nature governs his bodily appetites, but not without great effort, for ever since the fall of Adam, the machine works irregularly and is not properly controlled by that which should be the ruling force.

I have heard of some professors who dream that sin is utterly destroyed in them and that they have no more evil tendencies and desires. I shall not controvert their notion. If it is so, I congratulate them and greatly wish it were so with me. I have, however, had some little experience of perfect people and I have generally found them the most disagreeable, touchy, and sensitive persons in the world, and some of them have turned out to be such detestable hypocrites that I am rather afraid of a person who has no imperfections. As soon as I learn that a brother states that he has lived for months without sin, I wonder whether his secret vice is lewdness, or theft, or drink—and I feel sure that somewhere or other there is a leak in the ship.

The sin which lurks in the flesh will grow weaker in proportion as the holy principle of which I have to speak grows stronger, and it is at no time to be tolerated or excused—we are to fight against it, conquer it, and

ultimately it is to be destroyed in us, root and branch—yet there it is and let not the young Christian be staggered when he finds it there.

When we are born again there is dropped into our soul *the living and incorruptible seed* of the Word of God which lives and abides forever. It is akin to the divine nature and cannot sin because it is born of God—it has no tendency to sin, but all its appetites are heavenward and Christ-ward. It never stoops from its high position; it is always aspiring towards heaven. It is at deadly enmity with the old nature which it will in the end destroy, but as I have said before, it has its work to do and it is a work which, assisted even by divine strength, will not be accomplished all at once. It is a warfare which, when it seems ended, has often to be renewed since after long and victorious campaigns, the routed enemy returns to the field.

Now, I would like each Christian to be assured that he has this second principle in him. It may be weak, it may be struggling for an existence, but it is there, my brethren. If you have believed in Jesus, you have the life which hates sin and makes you repent when you have fallen into it. That is the life which cries, "Abba, Father," as often as it thinks of God. That is the life which aspires after holiness and delights in the law of God. This is the new-born principle which will not permit you to be at peace if you should wander into sin. It finds no rest but in the bosom of that God from whom it came and in likeness to that God from whom it sprang.

These are the two principles which make up the dual man—the flesh and the spirit—the law of the mind and the law of sin, the body of death and the spirit of life.

We notice, secondly, that THE EXISTENCE OF THESE TWO PRINCIPLES IN A CHRISTIAN NECESSITATES A CONFLICT, even as the text says, "Another law in my members *warring against the law of my mind."* The lion will not lie down with the lamb in us. Fire will not be on good terms with water. Death will not parley with life, nor Christ with Belial. The dual life provokes a daily duel.

I am not sure that the conflict between the new nature and the old is felt by all young Christians at first. Frequently Christian life may be divided into three stages—the first period is that of *comfort,* in which the young Christian rejoices in the Lord and his principal business is to sing and tell what God has done for him.

The more of this the better. After that, very often comes the stage of *conflict*—instead of being children at home, we have grown into men and

therefore we must go to war. Under the old law, when a man was married or had built a house, he was excused from fighting for a season, but when that was over, he must take his place in the ranks. And so is it with the child of God—he may rest awhile but he is destined for the war. The period of conflict is often succeeded, especially in old age, by a third stage which we may call *contemplation,* in which the believer sits down to reflect upon the goodness of the Lord towards him and upon all the good things which are in store for him. This is the land Beulah which John Bunyan describes as lying on the edge of the river and so near to the Celestial City that you can hear the heavenly music across the stream and when the wind blows that way, you can smell the sweet perfumes from the gardens of the blessed. That is a stage which we must not expect to reach just now. My young friend, inasmuch as you are at first weak and tender, the Lord may be pleased to screen you from a great many temptations and from the uprisings of your flesh. But the probabilities are that before long you will put down your harp and take up your sword—and your joy of spirit will give place to the agony of conflict. Sin is in you, lurking in secret places, though it has not as yet leaped forth upon you as a young lion on its prey. You perhaps have thought, "I shall do better than those who have gone before me. I shall shine as a brilliant saint." Let not him that puts on his harness boast as though he takes it off. There are fights before you and I warn you of them, so that when you remove from the state of content to the state of conflict you may confess, "Before it came to pass I was warned of this and therefore I am prepared for it." The reason of the fight is this—the new nature comes into our heart to rule over it—but the carnal mind is not willing to surrender its power. A new throne is set up in the heart and the old monarch, dethroned, outlawed, and made to lurk in holes and corners, says to himself, "I will not have this. Why should it be? Here am I, who was once this man's king, snubbed and made to hide myself as though I were a stranger. I will get the throne back again." Master Bunyan, in his "Holy War," which is a very wonderful allegory, describes Diabolus, you know, as having his city taken from him. But after the city had been taken, there lurked in the holes and corners of that city certain subjects of Diabolus and these were always plotting and planning how they could get the city back. They opened the gates at night to let in their old king. They sowed discontent among the inhabitants. This is the reason for the perpetual strife within our souls. The old lusts that are under ban and curse and which we are hunting to crucify, put their heads together and labor

to regain dominion. The flesh will wait till you are in a very quiet frame of mind and feel very secure—and then it will come down upon you with its evil fascinations. At another time it may be you are in great trouble and you feel ready to sink—and then comes the devil upon you like a roaring lion, hoping to destroy your faith. He knows how to time the temptation and the flesh knows how to rise in insurrection when we are off our guard and when surrounding circumstances are all conducive to sin. We cannot be too watchful, for the flesh will rebel all of a sudden. We may get it down and think we have fettered it securely, but ah, it finds its hands, it breaks its bonds and lets fly an arrow at our heart! You said, "I shall never be angry again," and while you were congratulating yourself on the sweetness of your temper, you were all of a sudden provoked from quite a new quarter and your wrath boiled over again. "No," you said, "I never shall be impatient again," and yet within a few moments you were as full of murmuring as ever you had been in your life. Till the flesh lies in the grave, sin will not be dead.

And let me warn you that the flesh may be doing us more mischief when it seems to be doing no mischief at all than at any other time. During war, the sappers and miners will work underneath a city and those inside say, "The enemy is very quiet. We hear no roaring of cannon. We see no capturing of Malakoiffs. Where can the enemy be?" They know their business well enough and are laying their mines for unexpected strokes. Hence an old divine used to say that he was never so much afraid of *any* devil as he was of *no* devil. That is to say, when Satan does not tempt, it is often our worst temptation. To be let alone tends to breed a dry rot in the soul. "He has not been emptied from vessel to vessel," said the prophet of old, "He is settled upon his lees"—this spoke he of one who was under divine displeasure. Stagnation is one of the worst things that can happen to us and so it happens that we are never secure.

Thus, dear friends, I have showed you that there is a conflict within. And let me congratulate you if it *is* a conflict. The ungodly know no such inward warfare. They sin and they love it—but where there is spiritual conflict the grace of God is present. We do sin, but we hate sin. We fall into it, but we loathe it and fight against it. And every true child of God can say honestly that there is nothing in this world he dreads so much as to grieve his God. If you were dead in sin you would have no trouble about it, but those inward pangs, those deep emotions, those bitter sighs and cries, that exclamation of, "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" all indicate spiritual life. While I

sympathize with your sorrow I congratulate you that you feel it, for this is one of the marks of a child of God. Forget not that in renewed men there are two opposing forces and that these necessitate a life-long war.

Thirdly, we must now note that this warfare SOMETIMES LEADS US INTO CAPTIVTY. Observe, "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and *bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members*." "What does that mean?" asks one. It means this, that if you sin it will be captivity to you if you are a child of God. The sinner may find pleasure in sin, but you will not if you are God's son. You will be like a slave in chains, locked up in a horrible dungeon, if you fall into sin. But does the old nature make Christians captives? Yes, in this way. First, many a Christian feels himself in captivity for the very *fact that the old nature has risen within him*. Let me explain myself. Suppose that the old nature suggests to you some sin—you hate the sin and loathe it and you despise yourself for lying open to be tempted in such a way. The very fact that such a thought has crossed your mind is bondage to your pure spirit. You do not fall into the sin—you shake off the serpent—but you feel its slime upon your soul. Do you not know what it is to have a very violent tendency towards an evil, the very thought of which is detestable to you? Your renewed mind exclaims, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" But yet the flesh says, "Do it, do it, do it." and pictures the sweetness and the pleasure of it. With your whole soul you set yourself against the temptation. The cold sweat stands upon your brow at the very thought of your falling into so foul a transgression and you cry to God in prayer. But yet the captivity of your soul is great while the trial lasts and even in the remembrance of it. You say to yourself, "I am afraid I dallied with the temptation. The bait would not have been so alluring to me if there had not been some consent of my soul to it." You also charge your heart with folly, saying, "Though I did not commit that sin, yet there was a hankering after it in me." Though others could not condemn you, but must even honor your self-denial, yet you condemn yourself for any degree of inclination in the wrong direction and you feel that the temptation has brought you at once into captivity. What a difference there is between a spot on one thing and a spot on another. A man makes a spot with ink on my coat and nobody perceives it—but if he were to cast a drop upon this white handkerchief, how soon everybody would see it. The old nature is like a black coat, too dark to show a blot—but one spot of temptation falling on the pure white linen of the new nature troubles us exceedingly—we see it and we loathe it and

we cry out to God that we may get rid of it. The very passing of temptation across a renewed soul brings it into captivity. I stood one day in Rome looking at a very large and well executed photograph of a street and an ancient temple. I had never seen so fine a photograph, but I noticed that right across the middle of it was the trace of a mule and a cart. The artist had done his best to prevent it, but there was the ghost of that cart and mule all along the way, right across the picture. I do not say it spoiled it, but it certainly did not improve it. Even so, oftentimes, when our heart is most cleansed and bears best the image of God, right across the fair picture comes the trace of a temptation and we are grieved. An observer unskilled in art might not notice the mark on the photograph, but a careful artist, with a high ideal, is vexed to see his work thus marred. And so with moral stains—that which the common man thinks a trifle is a great sorrow to the pure-hearted child of God and he is brought into captivity by it.

Sometimes, too, a Christian's captivity consists in his *losing his joy through the uprising of the flesh*. I speak what I am sure many of the children of God here know. You are rejoicing in the Lord and triumphant in His name and by-and-by some corruption struggles for the mastery. "It shall not rise," you say. You put it down but it strives and you strive, too—and in the struggle, the joy of the Lord, which was your strength, seems to be taken away from you. A sense of the dreadful fact that the leprosy is in the house of clay in which you live terrifies you and you are so anxious to get the leprosy out of the walls that you would sooner see the old house decay into dust than live where evil so readily approaches you. This sight of inbred sin may cast a chill upon your joy. You want to sing the praises of God, but the temptation comes just at that very minute and you have to battle with it and the song gives place to a battle cry. It is time for prayer and you are in the attitude of devotion, but somehow you cannot control your thoughts—they will roam here and there under the force of the flesh. My thoughts frequently seem like a lot of colts let loose, tearing over the fields of my soul without restraint. In holy contemplation you try to concentrate your thoughts upon the subject in hand and you cannot—very likely somebody knocks at the door at the same time, or a child begins to cry, or a man begins to grind an organ under your window—how can you meditate? All things seem to be against you. Little outside matters which are trifling to others will often prove terrible disturbers of your spirit and what others smile at, you are made to weep over, for the flesh will lay hold of the most paltry concerns

to prevent your coming into communion with the Lord your God. Thus by taking away our joy and marring our fellowship, the old corruption within us leads us into captivity.

But ah, brethren, this is not all, for *we do not always escape from actual sin*. We do, in moments of forgetfulness, that which we would willingly undo and say that which we would willingly unsay. The spirit was willing to be perfect, but the flesh was weak—and then the consequence is to a child of God that he feels himself a captive. He has yielded to treacherous blandishments and now, like Samson, his locks are shorn. He goes out to shake himself as he did before, but the Philistines are upon him. His God is not with him and it will be a happy thing for him if he does not lose his eyes and come to grind at the mill like a slave. Oh, what need we have to be on our guard and to look to the strong for strength, for this old nature within us will bring us into captivity if it can and will hold us there.

But I must close with this reflection, that THIS WARFARE AND THIS OCCASIONAL TRIUMPH OF THE FLESH MAKE US LOOK TO CHRIST FOR VICTORY. The apostle asks, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And his reply is, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Brethren and sisters, I am persuaded that there is no place so safe and none so proper and fitting for any of us as a sinner's place at the foot of the cross. I have read a great deal about perfection in the flesh and I have tried to get it. I have also tried to pray after the fashion which I suppose a perfect man would pray—but the theory will not hold water as far as I am concerned. When I went up to the temple in that way and tried to pray, I found a Pharisee at my elbow. A good way off, I saw a poor sinner striking his breast and saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," and I perceived that he went away justified, while I stood there and envied him. I could not stand it. I went back to my old place at the sinner's side and smote my breast, uttering the old cry, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Then I, too, felt at ease and I went home justified and rejoicing in the Lord.

Beloved, whenever there is a question between me and the devil as to whether I am a child of God, I have given up seeking evidence in my own favor or turning to my experience to prove that I am in a state of grace, for that cunning old lawyer knows more about my infirmities than I do and can very soon bring two to one against me. My constant way is to tell the accuser, "Well, if I am not a saint, I am a sinner and Jesus came into the world to save sinners, therefore I will go to Christ and look to Him

again." The devil cannot answer that. You that are oldest in the divine life—and I speak to some who have known the Lord these 50 years—I am sure that you find times in which no mark, evidence, or experience is worth a penny to you by way of comfort and you are led to adopt the simple expedient which I have recommended to all the tempted ones. It will be wise to always live upon Jesus. Begin again at the foot of the cross where you began at first, with the old cry—

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

That is the way to conquer sin as well as to overcome despair for when faith in Jesus comes back to your soul, you will be strong to fight with your corruptions and you will win the victory, which you will never gain if you allow your struggles with your sins to drive you away from your Savior. Let us resort, then, to Christ who gives us the victory and let us, the longer we live, praise Christ the more. You young Christians, you do not yet know what a dear Savior you have found. You know you have found Him, but He is a dearer Christ than you think He is. You were naked and He has clothed you—ay, He has put the armor upon you which will ward off the darts of the arch-enemy. You were hungry and He has fed you—ay, but He has fed you with immortal bread—He is nourishing a divine life within your soul. He has given you peace and you are grateful for it—ay, but He has given you a peace which passes all understanding—that shall keep your heart and mind. You say it is sweet to find Him with you. So it is, but oh, how sweet it will be to have Him with you when you pass through the fires and are not burned; when you go through the floods and are not drowned; when you enter upon the final struggle and are not afraid. Oh, beloved, we may find out and shall find out more of our own needs, but we shall also discover more of Christ's all-sufficient fullness. The storm will become more terrible, but the Pilot's power to rule that storm will only be the more displayed. The ship may rock to and fro till all her timbers are strained and her keel may threaten to snap in two, but—

"He will preserve it, He does steer
Even when the boat seems most to reel,
Storms are the triumph of His art."

He will bring His people safely through the howling wilderness and the land of great drought. Be not afraid, you that have begun the divine pilgrimage, for His fiery cloudy pillar will attend you. Dragons there are, but by the sword of the Spirit you shall wound the dragon as of old he was wounded at the Red Sea. There will be death to fight with, but Christ has

died and you shall be victorious over the grave. Expect conflict. Be not astonished when it comes, but as confidently expect victory and shout in prospect of it. As surely as the Lord has called you to this celestial warfare, He will bear you through it. You shall sing on the other side of Jordan unto Him that loved you and washed you from your sins in His blood. In the haven of the blessed, in the land of the hereafter, in the home of the holy where the weary are at rest, you shall sing the high praises of God and the Lamb.

I would to God this sermon had a relation to all those who hear or read it, but I fear it has not. I can only hope that those who have no conflict within may begin to feel one. May God grant that you may not rest quiet in sin, for to be at peace with sin is to be sleeping yourself into hell. May God awaken you, that you may flee to Christ for mercy at this very hour and there shall be joy in His presence. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 7.
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THE MEAT AND DRINK OF THE NEW NATURE
NO. 1460

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

"For My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed."
John 6:55.

WE know that the Savior spoke of spiritual, not carnal things, and He spoke of Himself not as being in any sense meat for our bodies—that could not be—but as being food for our souls. This statement is very plain to us, but those who heard it at the first found it very difficult to understand. Nor need we wonder, for men of the schools who play with letters, words, and phrases, frequently meet with difficulties where none exist. The Jews of our Lord's day had fallen into the foolish habit of taking words to pieces and dwelling upon the syllables and letters until they seemed to have lost all power of getting at the plain meaning which ordinary language was intended to convey. They blinded their own eyes with the pretense of superior wisdom; made puzzles and riddles out of plain words; raised a lot of dust and sat down in it blinded to the end. Our God has taught us more and given us to understand more clearly, for His Holy Spirit has given us back the childlike spirit so that we are willing to see the natural sense which words were meant to reveal. Now we see great force and clear expressiveness in that very language which seemed before to conceal the Savior's meaning. It was a veil to the Jews and they saw not—it is an instructive parable to us, which instead of hiding the truth of God, shadows it out to us and softens the light for our weak eyes. We see, I fear, even now but dimly, for our spiritual sight is scarcely clear as yet, but we see, blessed be God for that, and we see Jesus and something of His loving meaning. We do more than see—we enjoy and therefore know to the life what it is to feed upon His flesh, which is meat indeed and to drink His blood, which is drink indeed.

We cannot attempt to explain the deep mysteries of our text, but rather, as the swallow touches the brook with his wing and is away again, we will glance at these crystal waters of this sacred truth and then up and away. The text teaches us, first, *what Christ must be to us*. We shall consider, secondly, *what is bound up in this*. And thirdly, *what reflections naturally arise out of it*.

I. WHAT CHRIST MUST BE TO US. The answer from the text is, He must be our meat and drink. He must be everything to us—the one thing needful, the indispensable, necessary all-sufficient supply. He must be the source of strength, the support of life, and we must feel Him to be so. He must, to come back to the figure, be meat and drink to us. Our Lord in speaking to the Jews was doubtless thinking of the paschal lamb and

of the time when Israel came out of Egypt—when they not only had the blood of the lamb sprinkled upon their houses for their security, but the lamb itself within them as their sustenance. They sat down to feed upon it before they enjoyed the fullness of redemption by passing out of Egypt from under the bondage of Pharaoh. They did not understand that symbol and they little knew what our great Lord and Master meant when He employed it to set forth Himself and said, "My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed."

Our Lord Jesus Christ must be to us, then, our *spiritual* meat and drink. What do we mean by that?

First, that *the doctrine of God incarnate must be the food of our souls*. Brethren, we have no doubt as to the true and proper deity of our Lord Jesus. We have long since passed out of the region of controversy about that for He has been God to us in the work of salvation and in the new creation which we have experienced through His power. We have, moreover, no doubt about His humanity, but we do not usually dwell enough upon it. We are bound to adore His deity, but we must not forget that He is as truly man as if He were not God and as much a brother to us as if He were not the Son of the Highest. Jesus is assuredly man. Now feed on this. The man Christ Jesus heads up a new race—as the first Adam headed up the race of old and was our federal head to stand or fall for us and we were to stand or fall in him—so is there now a new head who brings us up from the ruin of the first Adam's fall and puts us into a new position before the living God. There is a man who has redeemed us. There is a man who has made all the men in Him well-pleasing to God. There is a man who represents manhood in perfection in the glory above. There is a man in whom all believers are—even as we read that Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Melchisedec met him. We are in Christ and we now stand before the eternal throne in that blessed representative man. Feed on this doctrine. Jesus is a real man, though clothed with all power He is God and yet He is the mirror of tenderness. He rules all things and yet is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. You must believe this and you must receive it—and you must rest upon it—otherwise you have no life in you. Some try to turn this fact into a myth, but it is no parable or figure of speech, for the Christ who spoke these words was there before them—one whom they had often seen eat and drink. He spoke of Himself with His own lips and was not a phantom or apparition, but a solid existence of flesh and blood. So then, it is upon the historical Christ, whose existence is a matter of fact, that my soul must feed as I believe Him to be both human and divine.

But this is not all—*the food to be fed upon is not merely God incarnate, but Christ suffering*. Notice that He puts it, "My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed"—when the flesh and the blood are mentioned separately, death is implied. The two being divided and being named together in one connection are the token and emblem of our Savior's vicarious sacrifice. We also (I am speaking of the brethren worshipping here) have long ago passed beyond the region of controversy as to the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord. If it is not so, then is our

preaching vain and our hope is also vain and we are yet in our sins. We have no hope of eternal life save that which begins, centers, and ends in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. "This man, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God"—that is our sole hope. *He* has made expiation for sin—

"He bore, that we might never bear,
His Father's righteous ire."

We are now to build up our souls by feeding upon the suffering, the crucified, the dead, the buried Christ, as having stood as our representative and as having endured death in our place. You cannot obtain comfort apart from this if you have felt the weight of sin. And you cannot continue happy apart from this great historical fact if you are conscious of sin. Fly, my hearers, into the wounds of Jesus and like doves, you shall find shelter in that rock, but with eager wings you may glide over the waste of human thought without finding a rest for the soles of your weary feet till you light upon the truth of the great substitution. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," is the first bell of heaven's marriage peal—and the second has an equally sweet note of its own—"Christ died for our sins." Ring them both often. Listen to them as they sound forth, "God *with* us, Christ *for* us." Incarnation, substitution—was there ever better meat and drink for a hungry soul? This surely satisfies the desire of the most hungry spirit—"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

I have, as it were, in those few words set out the delicacies of the feast. But now I would have you note that our Lord must be to us meat and drink—and *meat is not intended to look at, but to feed on.* I heard the other day that in a certain Socinian place of worship they have gone the length of setting the bread and wine on the table for the people to look at, but they suppose that it is quite unnecessary that they should actually eat and drink. It is fittingly done of them—that is consistent with their creed. They have no Christ to feed upon. There is nothing in their belief which could feed the soul of a mouse, if a mouse had a soul. Why should they attempt to feed the people in figure when really they have no incarnate God or atoning Savior? If it is true that in one of their places of worship they have exhibited the bread and wine instead of handing it out to be eaten, it is remarkably typical of their bloodless, lifeless gospel. Their Christ who is no deity; their Jesus who is no sacrifice for sin. How can the soul find food there? But we must beware lest we ourselves should ever rest content with merely glancing at Christ and not partaking of Him. What is to be done with food, with meat and drink? It is to be received. Food on the table does not nourish. It must be taken into the hand. The cup on the board will never cheer—it must be lifted—it must be appropriated. I know that many of you have, by a humble but brave faith, appropriated Christ as He is set before you in the gospel. He has bid you come and eat and you have come pressed by a sore famine that was in your soul. You have come and you have said, "He is mine," and you have taken Him to yourselves by simple childlike confidence in Him. You have well done—continue to do the same. "As you have received

Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in Him." Go on receiving Him. "To whom coming," says the apostle, "as unto a living stone." Regard Him not as one to whom you have come by one act and have done with Him, but as one to whom you come continually. "Of His fullness have all we received and grace for grace," but we are going on receiving by continuing to believe in Him. Hold on to this. Having begun in the spirit, do not hope to be perfected by the flesh. Do not think that you are to be fed afterwards on something other than Christ, but go on receiving, appropriating, and taking home the great truths concerning your Lord. Here, my brethren, is the life of your faith. But even appropriating is not enough to constitute feeding. After taking the morsel, it is put into the mouth and received inwardly—the draught of wine is poured into the throat and it disappears. Receive truth not only as a matter of creed, but drink it in as the ox sucks in the water when he stands up to his knees in the pool. Take Christ into your very soul—into your *heart's* belief as well as into your mind's belief. Mental beliefs shift and change, but the inward soul's belief never alters. I reckon that we know nothing rightly till we have absorbed it and made it part and parcel of ourselves. The vital truths with regard to our Lord Jesus must go down into the inward parts of the soul, as the food descends into the secret parts of the belly to feed the entire man.

And you know what becomes of the food. It is taken up by the nature itself and becomes transmuted into it. After its digestion, it passes through various processes and ultimately becomes the life-blood out of which is built up nerve, muscle, sinew, bone, flesh, heart. Everything comes of it. Now, you must so believe in Jesus that no longer is it a matter of question with you whether you will retain Him or not, for if you have inwardly received Him, you cannot lose Him forever. Oh, that blessed "*Quis separabit*?"—"Who shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" It is difficult to deprive a person of that which he has received mentally, for facts learned in childhood are remembered even to old age. No one could compel another to forget, but yet without such compulsion the memory might relax its hold through lapse of years—the mind might part with that which it has received, but no known power could take away from a man that which he has eaten and assimilated. A person may very readily pick my pocket of my wallet, but what I ate yesterday he cannot steal. That is mine—it is joined to myself and has built me up. I do not know what portion of my flesh comes of my morning meal or of my mid-day repast, but there it is and there it must be. It has entered into me and never can be taken away from me. So when the soul takes in Christ's truth with that simple childlike faith which is the mouth, the truth goes into the soul and is thought over, trusted in, delighted in and becomes so part and parcel of the inner consciousness and of the new nature of the man that it would be utterly impossible to tear away that truth from him. Pound a true Christian in a mortar and every single atom would say, "I belong to Christ." Grind him finer than the smallest dust of the threshing floor and every minute particle would still say, "Christ is in me." For so it is that the Christ has en-

tered the man, permeated his nature, become his very life and now it is, "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." Now is the text fulfilled in us, "For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory." "Abide in Me," said our Lord and He gave His own promise to be with us forever. That is the result of eating Christ and to this we must come. Beloved, I have thus explained the matter as well as I can, but as old Rollock says, "The only way to understand feeding upon Christ is to feed upon Christ." This is a practical, personal, experiential business. In learning certain acts you must yourself become a practical scholar, the master cannot teach by merely setting the copy—the scholar must imitate it line by line with his own hand—and so here I can teach little by words only, you must practice what is spoken. Now feed on the Lord Jesus. Let each one of you do it. I know what some will do—they will not feed on Christ, but they will pick over the heavenly bread like dainty folks who have no stomach for their meat. This bit of Christ they would have, but the other does not suit their taste—justification by faith they would have, but not sanctification—they do not like that. It is a whole Christ you and I must have—a whole Christ as to every part of His teaching, character, work, and offices. We must receive Him into ourselves without division, rejoicing to take Him just as He is. Especially must we receive the spirit of Christ, for, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of His." We must partake in the loving spirit, the self-denying spirit, the generous spirit which lives not within itself, but goes forth in forgiveness of injuries and in seeking to benefit all mankind. We must have Jesus in us, delighting to take in the whole of Him, for He says farther on in this very chapter, "He that eats *Me"*—that is even more comprehensive than His, "flesh and His blood"—"He that eats *Me,* even he shall live by Me." The entire Christ must be taken into the soul to build up the inner man.

II. Now, secondly, WHAT IS BOUND UP IN THIS EATING OF HIS FLESH AND DRINKING OF HIS BLOOD? Here we will take you back to the context.

And notice, first, that there is, for this eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ, such an essential necessity that *he who has not so eaten and drank has no spiritual life at all.* It is a strong word, "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, *you have no life in you.*" He does not mean that they have no natural life—He is speaking about spiritual things. Some that are as foolish as Judaizers in the matter of sticking to the letter tell us that this means existence and that no man's eternal existence is certain except that of a believer in Christ. That dogma is not taught here, certainly. Our Lord is not speaking of existence—He is speaking of a far higher thing than existence, namely, *life.* Have you ever learned the difference between death and non-existence and between life and existence? If you have not, you are babes in understanding and you will often be blundering and losing your way in the midst of texts of Scripture. A man may exist in everlasting death, as, alas, all who die unbelievers must do, but blessed is he who lives!

Blessed is he who shall live forever! Let me repeat the word "lives"—I did not say "exists." What a glorious thing is life. Yet, if I had to explain to you what life is, I might find it far easier by some action of my own to show that I lived than to tell you exactly what life is. He, however, who eats Christ has life. He who has not done so has not life. Do you understand this—that unless you have received Christ by faith into your souls you have no life? You can work, you can walk, you can speak—you have all sorts of natural life—but you have not the life everlasting of which Jesus speaks. The life of God is not in you. You are dead and what a frightful condition that is—and to what greater horror does it lead! For wherever there is death, the dead thing will go a stage farther on. And what is that stage? Corruption! It only leaves a corpse alone long enough and it must corrupt. Flesh corrupts necessarily. Already there are some signs of corruption about every ungodly man—outward sin and especially the inward sin of rejecting Christ are grievous corruptions. Your worm has begun to devour, even the worm that never dies. Then will be reached another stage, for corruption must be cast into the fire. For utter rottenness, the end must be burning. O sinner, your fire has begun to burn—the fire that will never be quenched—for sin is the kindling of hell. It is an awful thing to abide in death and yet he that believes not on Christ is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God. It is enough to make you spring from your seats, O you that are unbelievers, to think that you are not waiting to be tried—you are condemned already. This is not a state of probation, as I often hear it said. Your probation is past. You are condemned already because you have not believed on the Son of God—and death is now upon you. The sentence has already begun to take effect and it will go on to the consummation of corruption till at last the Lord shall say, "Bury My dead out of My sight," and you must be driven from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. There is no life in you unless you have received Christ. Will you think of this, you thinkers? Only think of your being dead. Will you think of this, you ceremonialists to whom the outward baptism and the outward Lord's Supper and the church attendance and the chapel going are everything? Unless you have fed on Christ there is no life in you.

Then comes, in the next place, the further truth, namely, that *all who have received Jesus Christ to be to them their meat and drink have eternal life.* "Whoso eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life." I do not know how our brethren who doubt the final perseverance of the saints manage to escape from the plain teaching of the text. There are always ways of getting over everything—you can drive a coach and six they say through any form of human language. But it does seem to me that if I have eternal life I must eternally live and cannot possibly die. If I have got eternal life—if words mean anything—I am an eternally saved man. If I have received Jesus Christ into my soul, I have the life in me which will no more die than the life of God, for God's own life is eternal life and if I have received such life as His, how can I perish? I shall not be slain by sin—the life in me cannot sin because it is born of God. The life in me will throw off the darts of temptation if it is eternal life. There remains

nothing for it but to shake off the death which often surrounds it by reason of the old man and to mount up like a bird set free from its cage, singing because of its escape, singing in the joy of life, and winging its happy way upward to the throne of God.

Rejoice then, dear friends, that if you have received Christ, you have eternal life in actual possession at this moment. "Sometimes I don't feel it," you say. Do not try to live by feeling. It is the most uncertain thing in the world. You might as well try to live by the barometer. Feeling goes up and down, up and down and changes more often than the moon. It is hard, uncomfortable living. Live by faith, for it is written, "The just shall live by faith." Your life is a life of trust. Keep to it.

"Ah, but I see so much about me that grieves me." Thank God it grieves you. If you see sin and it does not grieve you, it is a token of death. But if it grieves you, there is life in you, notwithstanding all the death that surrounds it. You may have seen a spark in the midst of a heap of autumn leaves which are all damp and will not burn, but only smolder and smoke. And yet that spark continues to live and the very smoke from the heap proves it is so. There is one who will not quench the smoking flax, but will fan it till it rises to a flame and then it will devour the leaves which covered it and dry up the dampness which sought to destroy it.

Furthermore, if you believe in Jesus and have received Him, you have gathered a life in which Christ gives us the *victory,* even through His name—life which will rise and rise and rise and conquer all sin. The believer's inner life must come to absolute perfection and tread every sin beneath its feet. Very different is this from the doctrine that a man who is a child of God may sin as he pleases and yet be saved. That doctrine is of the devil. But this is quite another doctrine and ministers to holiness. The quickened man will not willingly and habitually sin, for His seed remains in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God. The tone and tenor and bearing of his life will be towards holiness and not towards sin—and the Lord who is able to keep him from falling will preserve him to His eternal kingdom and glory and He that has begun a good work in him will perfect it unto the day of Christ.

Our Lord, having thus given us the negative and the positive in our text, tells us that His flesh and blood, or Himself, received into the soul are most efficient nourishment—in it is *satisfaction*. "My flesh is meat *indeed*." The Greek word is "truly," or some say, "true meat." Now that which we eat for the body is not true meat. As George Herbert says, "When you are at your meat, eat a bit and then say, 'Earth to earth I commit.'" It is a deadly business. It is burying earth in earth and that living grave of earth will be itself buried in earth by-and-by. The eating of material meat is the poor building up of a fabric that must ultimately crumble into nothingness. The meat we eat has all the elements of dissolution about it before we receive it and it only feeds for a short time and therefore it is not meat indeed.

In the matter of mental food, how much there is which is not bread and can never satisfy the mind. There is nothing in the world that can fill

a soul to the fullest, but Jesus. Perhaps I address some thinker who has been trying to satisfy his soul by sniffing up the east wind of speculative philosophy. Ah, well, if you swallow a dose of Kant, or Hegel, Schleicrmacher, or any one of those gentlemen—if you do not feel as if you had been eating bubbles and bladders, your mental constitution and mine greatly differ. There is nothing in them but gas or vapor less substantial. Why, a man may take down their books—a whole dozen of them—and devour their contents and then say, "What is it? Is it not much ado about nothing? These thoughts are dreams, vacuums, and airy nothings." All the philosophies that ever were invented could not satisfy a soul. The worst of it is that many do not want to be satisfied. *"We,"* they say, "would sooner be seekers after truth than finders of it." They somewhat differ from men of practical common sense who ordinarily would rather have money than earn it and would rather eat their dinners than hunt for them. Still that is their way and if they like it, I suppose they must have it. Every creature after its own order; but if you want to be fed, dear friends, depend upon it, nothing will feed you but Christ. There was a man of great appetite who lived many years ago and he began to feast ravenously. He was such a drinker that I may say of him that he drank up Jordan at a draught, and he was such an eater, that if you heard the story of what was brought to his table, you would be like the Queen of Sheba, utterly astonished and say that the half was not told you. His name was Solomon and he fed his soul with all the arts and sciences and with all the poetries and luxuries of the age. Nor did he refrain from laughter and wantonness. There was not a cup he did not drain, nor a dainty from any land, nor a fruit from any tree of which he did not eat. Yet when he rose up from that abundant banquet, all he had to say was, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." I have seen a poor soul feed on Christ in a very humble cottage, upon a bed in a little room where she has lain alone almost all day and all night long, year after year, with many aches and pains and scarcely able to lift her hand to her head—with little but dry bread and a cup of water—and yet I have seen in that bedridden woman's pain-worn face a fullness of satisfaction. I have known her speak like one that had not a wish ungratified, nor a grief worth mentioning. I have beheld her when in her sufferings she could scarcely speak and yet her every word was essential poetry when she spoke of *Him,* her best Beloved, who had filled her soul even to overflowing. There is no food *indeed,* no drink *indeed*, for soul and spirit, but that which you find in the incarnate God and in the sacrifice of Christ. O you hungry, come here and eat that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness. O you thirsty, come here, for behold the waters are flowing freely and the wines on the lees are ready for you in Christ Jesus. That is what is bound up in feeding upon Jesus. There is satisfaction in Him.

And then there is bound up with it one other matter, namely, *indwelling*. I go over the same ground again. The Lord Jesus says, "He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood, dwells in Me and I in him." When you have eaten bread, it dwells in you and you in it—it goes into you and it is in you—it becomes part of yourself and you live by it and in its strength.

It is a part of the fabric in which you dwell. Even so, he that believes in Christ lives in Christ. He does not merely go to Christ, but he enters into Christ. I delight to remember that I am not merely under the shadow of my Lord, but as David in the caverns of Engedi, so does my soul hide herself right away in Jesus. We dwell in Him and are at home. Moreover, He enters into us by our feeding upon Him so that He becomes our life, the spring of our being, the object of our desire, the motive force of our service. We are woven together—Christ warp and ourselves woof—woven together in a living loom and so conjoined that it were hard to tell where *He* ends who has no end and where we begin who are lost in Him. We are less than the least of all saints and yet members of *His* body who is Lord of all.

We must leave the mystery remarking that if we have fed on Christ for ourselves, we have proof of what good meat it is we have fed on and we shall always pray, "Lord, evermore give us this bread."

III. I need your attention for a few minutes while, in the third place, we consider WHAT REFLECTIONS ARISE OUT OF THIS TRUTH.

I will simply throw them out for you to turn over for yourselves. They occurred to me when I was hearing a brother preach upon a kindred subject. They took hold of my soul. May they prove useful to you.

And the first was this. If I have a life that feeds on Christ, *what a wonderful life it must be*. My bodily life is wonderful, yet it only feeds on the fruits of the earth. My mental life is a marvel, but I know that I can build it up with literature and thought. Above all these I have a life which cannot feed on anything but the flesh and blood of the Son of God. What a life that must be! What a wonderful being a man is when God is in him. I almost reverence the meanest saint when I think of this, for he bears about with him not a Kohinoor, but a gem of life, compared with which the queenly diamond pales into a glittering vanity. O love divine, do You tabernacle in the sons of men! I have been speaking of mysteries, but I ask you to explain which is the greater mystery, the incarnation of God in Christ or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers? They are two wondrous stoops of deity which can only be likened to each other, being each one without other parallel. The spiritual life given to the regenerate must be a life of inconceivable excellence and heavenliness since it can only feed on Christ Himself.

The next thought is, if we have the life that feeds on such meat as this, *how strong it must be*. They say of such-and-such men that they may well be strong, seeing what good food they have. Ay, but see what food we have—how strong we must be. Do we know our own strength? I do not mean our natural strength, for that is weakness, but I mean the strength which lies in the new nature when it has fed on Christ. O brethren, we are strong to do. We are strong to be. We are strong to suffer. And to take an easy illustration of this—the one that occurs to me first—look at how the saints have suffered. Take down "Foxe's Book of Martyrs." Read of Marcus Arethusa, stung to death by wasps without a sigh. Think of Blandina tossed on the horns of bulls, exposed in a red-hot iron chair, and yet never flinching. Give up Christ? They never dreamed of

such a thing. Think of Lawrence on the gridiron and other innumerable heroes who were made strong because Christ was in them. Ay, and turn to humble men and women over yonder in Smithfield who could clap their hands while every finger burned like a candle and could shout, "None but Christ! None but Christ!" Why, they fed on the flesh and blood of Christ and that made them mighty. They were tortured on the rack like Anne Askew and yet they scorned to yield. Brave woman! The priests and the friars could not vanquish her. Neither could all the Bishop Bonners in the world burn Christ out of poor Tomkins. When Bonner held the poor man's finger over the candle and said, "How will you like that in every single limb of your body?" Tomkins smiled at the bishop and said that he forgave him the cruelty that he was doing him. Christ in a man makes him a partaker of divine strength. Do you not think, my brethren, that as you are not called to suffer, you ought to lay out your strength in the line of doing, giving, self-denial, and serving Christ by holy living? Certainly you should try to do so and your strength will be found equal to it. You do not know how strong you are, but Paul shall tell you, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me." Well may you do all things if you have fed on Him who is all and in all.

Then a third reflection crossed my mind. If we have a life that feeds on this, *how immortal it must be*. We have a text to prove that and we have given it to you already—"He that believes on Him has everlasting life." When a man has nothing but bad food, you do not wonder that he dies. It is little marvel that they died by millions in India and China, considering how little nourishment they had during the famine. But if you and I eat Christ, eat the incarnate God and drink His blood, how can we die? What, kill a man that has even a particle of Christ in him! The devil cannot do it—he knows his Master. And what does Christ say? "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." Oh, blessed truth! We live, not only because our life is itself eternal, but because it feeds on eternal meat. We keep on receiving Christ day by day, for we live upon Him. Eating is not a work that we finished 25 years ago, but we continue to feed upon Jesus and therefore we live. Feeding upon Christ does not mean being converted and then saying, "I am safe and have no more need to care." Ah, no. It means beginning to receive Him in conversion and continuing to feed upon Him forevermore. And they who do this may be sure that their life is immortal.

The next thought that struck me was this—if we feed on such meat as this, *how that life must develop*. I do not quite see in myself, and I may say that I do not see in some believers, the full result I should like to see from such food. Has this man been eating such divine food? Let us hear him. He cries, "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me." He is doing Christ's work spasmodically, feebly, sleepily. He does it without joy and is soon weary. Is this all he is going to do? Is this all he is going to be? Oh no, brethren, "It does not yet appear what we shall be." We shall grow. We shall grow. When I hear a man talk about being perfect in the flesh, I hope for the best and trust that he is not willfully lying. At any

rate, I do not believe him. I would like to *see* his perfection rather than to hear him talk about it. I have generally found that when a cart needs a bell, it is a dust cart. I never knew the people of the Bank of England ring a bell when they were going through the streets with bullion and I do not think it is likely that a man who has much grace will boast of it. Yet I do believe that we can be developed into something very wonderful. A man may grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord till his conversation is in heaven and he becomes wholly consecrated to the Lord—hating sin and living like Enoch who walked with God. There have been such men and there are such men and women still among us whose lives glitter with the light of God—why should not we be like they are? They are stars in God's firmament and they shine in the glory of the Most High. The Lord grant us that feeding on the divine meat we may develop till the image of Jesus is perfected in us.

And lastly, he who is thus fed, dear friends, *what company he must keep!* "He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood, dwells in Me," says Christ, "and I in him." What heavenly company is this! He goes home at night to his poor family, perhaps, and there is nothing great about his house that you can see—but if your eyes are opened you will see that it is a king's palace—and if you are one of the Lord's and can step inside, you will see that he has "come to the general assembly and church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven and unto God the Judge of all, and unto the spirits of just men made perfect," because he that has Christ in him has heaven around him. All good things are attracted by Christ in man. Put down a little honey and see how wasps and flies and bees come all around it. What is the sweetest honey in the universe? It is Christ—and if you have Christ in you, His name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love Him and they will come where He is. I will tell you—Christ is never without God and he that has Christ has the company of the Father. And Christ is never without the Spirit of God, for the Spirit of God is upon Him and he that has Christ is never without the Spirit. What divine society is this! Our Lord Jesus is never unattended by a retinue of sublime intelligences and so if Christ is in you, He will give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands lest you dash your foot against a stone. O Prince of the blood royal of heaven. O Peer of God's own kingdom, you are more nearly related to the King of kings than the peers of the realm can be to the Queen, for are you not married to the Prince Imperial? Is He not coming to receive you to Himself, that where He is, you may be, also? If you are feeding on Him, your union with Him is complete. If He is your food, if He is your raiment, if He is your dwelling place, if He is your all in all, I think I may compare you to that angel of whom Milton sang, even Uriel who dwelt in the center of the sun. It is there we live—in the very substance and essence of all things and all things move around us like satellites around a central globe, for we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people inasmuch as we have fed on Christ—and Christ dwells in us and we in Him.

I have not said anything to the unconverted and yet I have meant it all for them. When you spread a dainty feast, you practically invite the family to come and dine. It is the very best way of enticing them. If they are hungry, the meats on the table will make their mouths water and they will long to partake. Oh, my hearers, whoever you may be, if your mouths water after Christ, come and have Him for He is free to every soul that hungers and thirsts after Him.

The Lord give Him to you at once, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 6:41-71.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—260, 820, 761.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

BELOVED FRIENDS, By the time that this note is printed, the Special Services at the Tabernacle will be drawing to a close and it will be meet to harrow in the seed with renewed supplication. Shall so much effort be in vain? It cannot be and yet everything depends upon the mighty working of the Spirit of God and therefore we must seek His face if we would see large results. I suggest that every sermon reader should spend a special time in prayer next Lord's Day in pleading for the revival of Evangelical religion.

The Times pronounced the funeral oration of the Evangelical party, but it is not dead, even within the Established church and certainly not among Dissenters. Let us, however, pray that it may exhibit more vigorous life. There is need of such supplication, but it must be presented in faith and with holy persistence. So let it be.

For myself, one word only. I am recovering and rest is restoring mind and heart. Pray for me.

Yours to serve always,
C. H. SPURGEON,
Mentone, February 20, 1879.

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THE SEVEN SNEEZES
NO. 1461A

A SERMON
WRITTEN AT MENTONE,
BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"The child sneezed seven times."
2 Kings 4:34.

THE child was dead. Although he had been the special gift of divine promise and was therefore doubly prized by his parents, yet the little lad was not secure from the common hazards of life. He was in the harvest field in the heat of the day and sunstroke struck him down. His father bade one of his young men carry him home and he died on his mother's knees. The brave woman was heartbroken, but being full of energy and spirit, she rode off to Elisha, the man of God, to tell him her sorrow and to upbraid him with the short-lived blessing which had come to her through his prayers. She clung to the prophet in the hour of her bitter sorrow and he with his whole heart sympathized in her motherly grief. He hastened to the chamber where the dead child was laid upon the bed and there alone he exercised the sacred power of prayer—again and again he wrestled and at length prevailed—so that in the glad Shunammite's case it was true that "women received their dead raised to life again." Such is the power of faith when it uses the weapon of all prayer—even the gates of the grave cannot prevail against it.

The prophet's mode of operation when he lay upon the child and put his mouth upon the boy's mouth "and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands," is full of instruction. Spiritual life is the gift of God, but if the dead are to be raised by our means, we must enter into hearty sympathy with them. We must create spiritual contact and become in a great measure identified with those whom we would bless. The Holy Spirit works by those who feel that they would lay down their own lives for the good of others and would impart to them not only their goods and their instructions, but themselves, if by any means they might save some. O for more Elishas, for then we should see more sinners raised from their death in sin.

The first clear evidence that the child was restored to life was his sneezing. Doubtless it greatly rejoiced the prophet's heart. We, too, who are seeking the good of others will greatly exult if we are favored to see gracious tokens in those for whose good we labor. At all gospel meetings earnest people should be on the look-out for persons convicted of sin, awakened in conscience, or in any other manner made to feel the power of the life-giving Spirit. It will be well if these persons watch with instructed eyes so that they do not look for what they will never see, nor overlook that which should give them full contentment. Of natural life we may discern the tokens more readily than those of spiritual life. We need practice and experience in reference to this more mysterious matter or we may cause great pain to ourselves and to those whom we would befriend. Possibly we may gather instruction from the signs of life which contented the prophet—the child sneezed seven times.

This evidence of life was very *simple*. Nothing is more genuine than a sneeze. It is so far from being artificial that it is involuntary. As a rule, we sneeze not because we will, but because we must. No instruction, education, talent, or acquirement is necessary to a sneeze, nor even to a series of seven sneezes—it is the act of a child or of an illiterate peasant quite as much as of a philosopher or a divine. Yet Elisha asked no further evidence of life. He did not require the little lad to repeat a psalm or walk a mile or climb a tree. He knew that he was alive although the act of the newly-given life was of the most elementary kind. Just so, let us feel thankful when we hear the first groan of distress or see the first tear of repentance. Hopefulness is a helpful element in the success of those who have to deal with seeking sinners. We ought not to expect too much of inquirers. We ought not to be satisfied without signs of life, but the faintest sign of *life* ought to encourage us and lead us to *encourage them.* Very little knowledge can be looked for in inquirers. Elisha did not ask the child to say his catechism. Very little strength will be found in them. Elisha did not bid the child move the table, the stool, and the candlestick with which the room was furnished. No, the sneeze proved life, though it was inarticulate and the uninstructed expression of untrained vitality. Repentance for sin, desire after holiness, child-like trust in Jesus, tearful prayer, careful walking, delight in the Word of God, and intense self-distrust are among the elementary tokens of life—the sneezes of those freshly raised from the dead. Such tokens are to be seen in all the truly

living in Zion, whether old or young and therefore they are not proofs of *growth*, but of life—and it is life that we have to deal with at first—growth is a later consideration. Elisha did not leave the child upon the bed until he had developed into a man, but as soon as he had heard him sneeze, he said to the mother, "Take up your son." And we would earnestly say to every church in whose midst a soul has been born unto God, "Take up your son." Receive the convert though he is weak in the faith. Carry the lamb in your bosom, cherish, and nurture him till life has girded itself with manly strength.

This evidence of life was *in itself unpleasant.* To the child it was no pleasure to sneeze. We should most of us prefer to be excused from sneezing seven times. Many of the surest marks of the new life are by no means pleasurable. The regenerate are not at once happy—on the other hand, they are often in great bitterness for their sins and in sore anguish because they have pierced their Savior. The divine life is not born into the world without pangs. When a man has been nearly drowned and animation is restored by rubbing, the first movements of the blood within the veins causes tingling and other sensations which are exquisitely painful. Sin causes numbness of soul and this is attended by an absence of sensation—this is changed when life comes with its look of faith, for the first result is that men look on Him whom they have pierced and mourn for Him. Some regard pleasurable emotions as the clearest signs of grace, but they are not so. "I am so happy," is frequently a far less certain token than, "I am so grieved because I have sinned." We do not think much of the song of "Happy Day," unless it has been preceded by the mournful ditty—

"O that my load of sin were gone!"

A sneeze, again, is not very musical to those who hear it and so the first signs of grace are not in themselves pleasing to those who are watching for souls. Our minds may be greatly pained to see the sorrow and despondency of the stricken heart and yet that which we see may be, none the less, a certain sign of renewed life. We cannot take delight in heartbreak and convulsion of soul when considered in themselves—on the contrary, our earnest endeavor is to apply the balm of the gospel and remove such pains—yet are they among the most assured marks of the life of God in the soul in its earlier stages and we ought to be thankful whenever we see them. That which worldlings condemn as melancholy is often to us a hopeful sign of thoughtfulness. And the self-despair which

the ignorant deplore is cause for congratulation among those who pray for conversions. We delight in the sorrows of penitents because of their results—otherwise we take no delight in human grief, but the very reverse.

"The child sneezed seven times," the evidences of life were very *monotonous*. Again and again there came a sneeze and nothing else. No song, no note of music, not even one soft word, but sneeze, sneeze, sneeze, seven times. Yet the noises wearied not the prophet, who was too glad to hear the sounds of life to be very particular about their musical character. The child lived and that was enough for him. Much of the talk of inquirers is very wearisome—they tell the same melancholy tale over and over again. Answered a dozen times, they return to the same questions and repeat the same doubts. If one were seeking interest and variety, he would not look for it in the painful repetitions of persons under conviction of sin. But when we are watching for men's souls we do not grow weary even though in themselves the utterances of the newly awakened are frequently among the most tiresome of communications. They are often difficult to understand, involved, confused, and even absurd. They frequently betray culpable ignorance and sinful obstinacy, combined with pride, unbelief, and self-will—and yet in them there is a secret something which betokens an awakening to the higher life and therefore we cheerfully lend our ear. After days of exhortation and consolation, we find them still floundering in the Slough of Despond, sticking fast in the mire out of which they seem half unwilling to be drawn. We must render them the same help over and over again and point out the stepping stones for the hundredth time. Better that our service should be monotonous than that a soul should perish. The poor child may sneeze seven times if it will and we will gladly hear it, for it is a joy to know that it lives—and our poor neighbor may repeat his painful story until 70 times seven, if therein we can discover traces of the work of the Spirit upon his soul. Let us not be disappointed because at the first we get so little which is interesting from young converts. We are not examining them for the ministry—we are only looking for evidences of spiritual life—to apply to them the tests which would be proper enough for a doctor of divinity would be both cruel and ridiculous. In preachers of the gospel we expect variety and wish we could have more of it, but from the babe in grace we are

quite content to hear a cry and a cry is not a subject for musical variations any more than a sneeze.

Yet the sound which entered the prophet's ears was a *sure* token of life and we must not be content with any doubtful or merely hopeful signs. We want evidences *of life* and these we must have. We long to see our friends really and truly saved. Do but prove to us that they have passed from death unto life and we rejoice in the lowest form of that proof, but with less than this we cannot be quiet. Mere resolves to reform or even reform itself will not end our anxiety. No fine talk or expressed emotion or remarkable excitement will at all content us—we want them to be converted—to be born again from above, to be made new creatures in Christ Jesus. The child might have been washed and dressed in his best clothes, but this would not have fulfilled the prophet's desire. The lad might have been decked with a chaplet of flowers and his young cheeks might have been rouged into the imitation of a ruddy blush, but the holy man would have remained unsatisfied—he must have a sign of life. However simple, it must assuredly be a *token of life* or it would be in vain. Nothing could have been more conclusive than a sneeze. We remember a case in which a loving watcher fancied that a corpse moved its arm, but it was only imagination seconding the wish of affection. There could, however, be no room for a mistake in a sneeze, much less in seven sneezes. The prophet might safely call in the mother and commit to her care her undoubtedly living boy. So we also ask for indisputable marks of grace and till we see them we shall still pray and watch and feel painful anxiety.

So far we have kept to the text and as our space is limited we can only add these few precepts. Let the Lord's living ones believe that He can raise the spiritually dead. Let them make the ungodly their daily care. Let them bring them where souls are quickened—namely, under the sound of the gospel—and then let them prayerfully and wisely watch for results. The more watchers in a congregation, the better. They will be the preacher's best allies and greatly increase the fruit of his labors. What do you say, dear friends in Christ, can you not attempt this service? It requires graces rather than gifts, affection rather than talent. Awaken yourself to the delightful service and watch until you see the signs of spiritual vitality. However unnoticed by others, let them not escape your eyes and ears and heart, but be ready to take care of the newly-

quickened one, even if there is no more to be said of them than, "The child sneezed seven times."

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EYES OPENED

NO. 1461B

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

"And God opened her eyes."
Genesis 21:19.

THERE was a well of water close to Hagar all the while, though she saw it not. God did not cleave the earth and cause new waters to gush forth, nor was there need. The well was already there, but for all practical purposes it might not have been there, for she could not see it. The water was gone in her bottle, her child was dying of thirst, and she was ready to faint—and yet the cool spring was bubbling up hard by the spot. It was needful that she should see the well, quite as necessary as that the well should be there and therefore the Lord in great compassion led her to see it or as the text puts it, "God opened her eyes."

This was a small matter compared with the creation of a new-form rain, but our God does very little things as well as very great things when there is need for them. The same God who divides the Red Sea and makes the Jordan to be dried up, opens a poor woman's eyes. The same God who came with all His chariots of fire to Paran and with all His holy ones to Sinai and made the mountain utterly to smoke in His presence, is He of whom we read, "and God opened Hagar's eyes." The infinite Lord is at home in doing little things. He counts the stars, but He also numbers the hairs of our heads. Remember that the same God who molded the orb on which we dwell, also fashions every tiny dewdrop. And He who makes the lightning bolt to fly through the midst of heaven, wings every butterfly and guides every minnow in the brook. He prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah, but He also prepared a little worm to destroy the gourd. How condescending He is, since He carefully attends to minor matters for His children and not only kills for them the fatted calf, but

puts shoes on their feet. Sometimes very little things become absolutely necessary, for they act as the hinges of history, the pivots upon which the future turns. How frequently the whole course of a man's career has been affected by a moment's thought. The word of a child has affected the destiny of an empire—the chance expression of a speaker—as men talk of chance, has fired races with a new passion and changed times and shaken kingdoms. The Lord works gloriously by agents and events small and despised. God, by opening Hagar's eyes, secured the existence of the Ishmaelite race, which even to this day remains—from the little comes the great.

There may be persons present who need but very little to enable them to enter into eternal life—they need only that their eyes should be opened. May the Lord grant them that favor. O that He may now bid many a Hagar see His salvation. Why should the thirsty souls wait any longer? Everything is ready—they are on the borders of salvation—but they need that their eyes should be opened. Our subject at this time shall be *the opening of eyes*, taking rather a wide range, because it is a wide subject and hoping that both to those who see and to those who cannot see, there may come a gracious opening of the spiritual eye.

I. Our first head shall be that IF OUR EYES WERE FURTHER OPENED, THE RESULT TO ANY ONE OF US WOULD BE VERY REMARKABLE. We are at present limited in our range of sight. This is true of our natural or physical vision, of our mental vision and of our spiritual vision. And in each case, when the range of sight is enlarged, very remarkable discoveries are made. God has been pleased to open the natural eyes of mankind by the invention of optical instruments. What a discovery it was when, first of all, certain pieces of glass were arranged in connection with each other and men began to peer into the stars! What a change has come over the knowledge of our race by the invention of the telescope! How much of truly devout, adoring thought, and of deep, intense, unutterable reverence has been born into the world by the Lord's having in this sense opened men's eyes! When he turned his telescope upon the nebulae and discovered that these were innumerable stars, what a hymn of praise must have burst from the reverent astronomer's

heart. How infinite You are, most glorious Lord! What wonders have You created! Let Your name be had in reverence forever and ever.

Equally marvelous was the effect upon human knowledge when the microscope was invented. We could never have imagined what wonders of skill and of taste would be revealed by the magnifying glass and what marvels of beauty would be found compressed within a space too small to measure. Who dreamed that a butterfly wing would display art and wisdom and a delicacy never to be rivaled by human workmanship? The most delicate work of art is rough, crude, raw, compared with the most common object in nature. The one is the production of man, the other the handiwork of God. Spend an evening with the microscope and if your heart is right, you will lift your eye away from the glass to heaven and exclaim, "Great God, You are as wonderful in the little as You are in the great and as much to be praised for the minute as for the magnificent." While we say, "Great are You, O God, for You made the great and wide sea and the leviathan whose lot it is to play there," we feel that we can also say, "Great are You, O Lord, for You made the drop of water and have filled it with innumerable living things." Our physical eyes opened by either glass, reveal strange marvels and we may infer from this fact that the opening of our mental and spiritual eyes will discover to us equal wonders in other domains and thus increase our reverence and love towards God.

Suppose, dear brethren, that our eyes could be opened as to all our *past lives*. We have seen them, for we have traveled through them. But it was very cloudy when I went that way—I do not know how it was with you. None of us have our eyes thoroughly opened yet—we have up to now been traveling through life as men who journey in a mist. Even the things which have come close to us and have most affected us, have been hidden, as it were, in that which is not light, but visible darkness. And now, if we could look back upon the whole length of life—40, or 50, or 60, or 70 years with our eyes opened—how singular it would look! Our childhood—how different that period would now appear with God's light upon it. Those early struggles for a livelihood—we thought them difficult—but we already begin to see what discipline there was in them and

how necessary they were for us. Those losses and crosses—why even with our present partial sight we can see how much they were for our good! Yet there remains in life some singular things which we cannot as yet explain. Why was the favorite son taken away just when all our hopes were to have been fulfilled in him? Why was the husband struck down when the little children were so dependent? Why was the wife removed when a mother's care was most needed? Why fell that daughter sick so suddenly? Why were we ourselves balked in the moment of success? If our eyes could be opened so that we could see what would have been if things had gone differently, we would all of us thank God that our lives were ordered as they have been. Have you never heard of one who was grievously lamenting the death of his favorite son and falling asleep dreamed that he saw his boy alive again and that he beheld the life which that son would have led? It was such a life that he wept in his dream and waking he blessed God that his son could never act according to what he had seen in vision—it was better that he should be dead. Repine no more, my sorrowing friend, for that which you would have kept in your bosom might have turned into a viper. That which you thought a treasure might have burned in your heart like coals of fire. Providence has ordered all things wisely and if our eyes were opened, we would bow in adoring reverence and magnify the God who has done all things well. Our vision will be strengthened one day so that we shall see the end from the beginning—and then we shall understand that the Lord makes all things work together for good to them that love Him.

And now suppose again our eyes should be opened upon *the future*. Ay, would you not like to spy into destiny? My curiosity is probably as great as yours, but still it is balanced by another faculty and I declare that if I could see into tomorrow I would refuse to look. There is a desire in man to know what lines are written for him in the book of fate—whether they shall be bright or dark. Ah, dear friend, if your eyes could be opened as to all that is to happen, what would you do? If you were wise and knew your future, you would commit it unto God—commit it to Him though you do not know it. If you were wise you would wish to spend that future in His service if you knew it—spend it in His service

though it is hidden from you. If you knew what would happen, you would feel great need for faith—you do not know what will happen, but your need of faith is precisely the same. Trust in God, come what may. This thing is certain—that to live unsaved and unforgiven is a very dangerous condition. God help you to get out of it at once by flying to Jesus for present salvation and finding it on the spot. If you knew the future, it might make you idle, but it ought to make you diligent. If you knew the future, it might make you vain, but it should make you humble. If you knew the future, it might make you despondent, but it should make you trust. At any rate, knowing nothing at all about it, obey the voice of the Holy Spirit who says, "Commit your ways unto the Lord: trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass: and He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noon-day."

If our eyes were opened again on another point, as to *the existence of angels,* we would see marvels. We will enter into no speculations, but what a sight would be before us if suddenly we could behold all the creatures that are round about us. The prophet of old prayed for a young man that his eyes might be opened and immediately he saw horses of fire and chariots of fire round about Elisha. So do angels encircle the people of God, "The angel of the Lord camps round about them that fear Him." "He shall give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways: they shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone." "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them that are heirs of salvation?" Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth, both when we sleep and when we wake and if we were more like those pure spirits and more familiar with their Master, we should feel more gratitude to Him for setting them round about us. Fear not, you are not alone, O child of God. Your Father never calls off your bodyguard. The evil spirit comes to tempt you, but the Lord has set His sentinel angel to keep watch that no ill may approach you. If the Lord opened the eyes of His greatly beloved servants to see how many of these mighty intelligences are silently guarding them, they would cease to complain of loneliness while in the midst of such a thronging ministry of willing friends.

And what, once more; if your eyes could be opened to look into *heaven?* Where it is we do not know. It is not very far away. At any rate, the glorified know what we do here, for they rejoice over one sinner that repents. Evidently, too, it takes not long to travel there, for it was eventide when Jesus told the thief that he should be with Him in Paradise that very day and you may be sure he was there. Oh, that we could see the place of unveiled glory and unmingled bliss as we shall see it in an instant when our Father's messenger called death shall strike the scales from our eyes or rather remove these dim optics with which we blunderingly see and let our naked spirit gaze on the reality of things without these hindering eyes which do but inform us of their outward show. Oh, what glories shall we then see! What splendor above the light of the sun! What music, sweeter than harpers harping with their harps! What glory! Solomon knew not the likes of this. There is the light of all lights, the delight of all delights, the heaven of heavens, the sun of our soul, our all in all—Jesus upon the throne! What bliss to be with Him—with Him forever and ever. Break, thou eternal morning! Break even now! Would God that, at least for once, till the day breaks and the shadows flee away, we had our eyes opened to see the glories beyond—then this poor world would be despised by us—we would forget its pains and pleasures, we should rise superior to all its influences and we would rise to be heavenly ourselves. Wait awhile, brethren. Wait for a very little while. Wait a "wee and dinna weary," as the Scottish woman said and you shall see it all—

"Just when You will, O Bridegroom, say,
'Rise up, My love, and come away!'
Open to me Your golden gate
Just when You will, or soon or late."

So far, I have wandered from the text, but now in my second head, I will come back to it.

II. IN SOME THINGS OUR EYES MUST BE OPENED. Those I have spoken about are desirable in a measure, but these are absolutely necessary. For instance, as to divine salvation, our eyes must be opened. Hagar's case is a strange one. Picture it. She is thirsty and her boy is dying—her instincts are quickened by her love to her child and yet she cannot see a well of water. There it is! Close to her! Do you not see it?

Just there. She cannot see it till her eyes are opened. It is as plain as a pikestaff, but she does not perceive it. Now, this is a graphic representation of the position of many a seeking sinner. There is the way of salvation and if there is anything plain in the world, it is that road of life. The fact that two times two make four is no plainer than, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." "Look unto the Son of God and live"—what can be more simple? And yet nobody did ever understand the doctrine of, "Believe and live," till God opened his eyes. The well is there, but the thirsty soul cannot see it. Christ is there, but the sinner cannot see Him. There is the fountain filled with blood, but he does not know how to wash in it. There stand the words, "Believe and live"—simple words that need no explanation. They are legible by their own light and so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, may comprehend them. Yet, till the eternal light flashes upon the darkened eyeballs of the sinner, he cannot and he will not perceive the self-evident truth.

Why this inability to see? I suppose Hagar's eyes were somewhat darkened by her grief. She was broken-hearted, poor woman and therefore her eyes were not so clear as usual. So some souls have such grief for sin, such sorrow for having offended God, such fear of wrath to come that they cannot perceive the truth which would comfort them. What ails you, poor soul? What ails you? It is well that you grieve for sin, but Christ has come to put it away. It is well that you mourn your lost estate, but Christ has come to save you and there He is right before you if you can but see Him.

It was unbelief, too, that darkened Hagar's eyes. God had appeared to her years before, you remember, when she was in very much the same plight and He had given her a promise that He would make of her son that was to be born a great nation. She might have reflected that this could never happen unless the boy's life was preserved—and since he could not live without a drink of water she should have felt confident that water would be forthcoming. She was unbelieving, but it is not ours to judge her for, alas, we are unbelieving, too. Anxious soul, is that your case? Oh, if you could believe! Truly, you have good cause. It should not

be hard to believe what God says, for He cannot lie. But, still, unbelief darkens many an eye.

There are many who cannot see because of self-conceit. When great self-feasts his eyes upon his own good works or religious performances, of course he cannot see the way of salvation by Christ alone. May the Lord take these scales from your eyes, poor sinner, for self is a great maker of darkness. Nothing more surely holds a soul in gloom than a conceit of its own powers. How I wish I could so put the gospel as to win men from self. I preach the plan of salvation as plainly as ever I can. I use very homely metaphors. I have sometimes even employed what the more refined call vulgar expressions—I would be more vulgar still if I could thereby help a soul to see Christ. I tell you Jesus is near to you and within your reach and that salvation is close at your feet. You have but to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. But I know that after all is said and done, if you ever see Christ it will be because the Holy Spirit opens your eyes. I cannot open them, nor any other mortal man. Since the world began it has not been known that any man has opened the eyes of one that was born blind. Oh, that the Lord would be pleased now to open the eyes of every sinner here to see salvation in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

III. I must leave that point and finish with one more. IN OUR PRESENT CASE IT IS VERY DESIRABLE THAT OUR EYES SHOULD BE OPENED. To many it is imperatively necessary at this very moment, for if not now recovered from their blindness they will die in their sins. In this great throng there are some to whom it is pre-eminently desirable that their eyes should be opened at once to see what the inevitable result of their present mode of life will be, for their blindness is the source of great peril to them. That young gentleman who is spending his money upon the race course and loose society—I should think he might see with half an eye what will come of his conduct. The devil never runs express trains to hell—there is no need for them—for you can go there fast enough by racehorses. The turf has furnished to many an express method of ruining their fortunes and their souls. Get into that line of things—and all it means and all the society that goes with it—and your future needs no

prophet. Many young men do not think till it is too late to think. I wish I could put a cool hand upon that hot brow and stop that young man and make him stand still and consider. O that the Lord would open his eyes. And that young woman who has begun to look (not much, as yet) on what is called gaiety. Ah, the Lord stop you, my sister, and open your eyes before you go one step farther—for one step farther may be your ruin. And that tradesman who has begun—no, he has not quite begun as yet—but he is thinking about a course of trade which will land him in something more shameful than bankruptcy. I pray the Lord to open his eyes that he may see matters in the true light. I see a man before me who is about to commit moral suicide. O for a gleam of light just now and a touch of that finger which can open blind eyes. I cannot particularize and go into every case, but I have upon me a strong impression that I am speaking to some young man whose future depends upon his prudent pausing and careful consideration before he puts his foot down again. One step more and you fall. I beseech you, stand still and hear what God would speak to you. Turn, turn from your sins and seek your Savior now and He will be found of you at once and there shall be a life honorable and bright before you to His glory. But if you go one step farther in the way in which the tempter's charms, like siren music, would entice you, you are lost forever. God help you, therefore, to stop and may it be said of you, "God opened his eyes."

Now, leaving all these themes of thought, I would remind you that we are about to gather at the communion table and there we should sit with opened eyes. Those who love the Lord cannot endure to sit as blind men in His palace, but they long for all the sight which grace can give them.

First, we would have opened eyes that we may *see Jesus to be very near us*. Do not think of Him just now as if He were far away in heaven. He is there in His glorious personality, but His spiritual presence is here also. Did He not say, "Lo, I am with you always" and "If I go away I will come again"? He abides with us by His Spirit forever. Come, let us sit while this sacramental feast is going on and sing—

"Amidst us our Beloved stands,
And bids us view His pierced hands;
Points to His wounded feet and side,

Blest emblems of the crucified.
If now with eyes defiled and dim,
We see the signs but see not Him,
Oh may His love the scales displace,
And bid us see Him face to face!
Our former transports we recount,
When with Him in the holy mount,
These cause our souls to thirst anew,
His marred but lovely face to view."

We desire that you may have your eyes opened to see *what you are in Christ*. You complain that you are black in yourselves—but you are most fair in Him. You lament that you are so wandering, yes, but you are fixed in Him. You mourn that you are so weak—yet you are strong in Him. A good man went the other day to visit a poor child who was dying—a child whom the Lord had taught many things—and the dear little fellow, as he put out his wasted hand said, "So strong in Christ." He could hardly lift a finger and yet he knew that his weakness was clothed with power in Christ. We are poor puny things, but we can do all things through Christ. We are poor foolish things, but we are wise in Christ. We are good-for-nothing things, but we are so precious in Christ, so dear to God in Christ as to be numbered with His jewels and known as the Lord's peculiar portion. We are sinful creatures in ourselves and yet we are perfect in Christ Jesus and complete in Him. These are strong expressions, but as they are scriptural, they are assuredly true. How blessed we are in our covenant Head! The Lord open our eyes to see this.

Lastly, dear friends, may the Lord open your eyes to see *what you will be in Him*. Ah, what will you be in Christ? In a very little while we shall be with Him. Many of our members have gone home to Jesus and one very earnest brother, very diligent in working for the Master—a young man of whom we expected much—has been swept away by the receding tide while bathing in the sea. He has gone to his rest, I doubt not. Older friends have also ascended to God just lately, rejoicing to enter into the joy of the Lord. Between now and next month's communion, some of us will probably have departed to the Father. Let our eyes be opened to behold by faith the glory soon to be revealed. It may almost make you laugh for joy to think of your head wearing a crown—that poor head of yours.

These poor aching knees and weary feet—there will be no more toil for them. That poor scantily furnished room, hard fare, narrow means, and weary labor will all be exchanged for mansions of rest, bread of bliss, and new wine of delight. You know each pavement stone between here and your house, for you come so often to the Tabernacle—but you will be walking the streets of gold before long to the eternal temple above. Instead of noisy streets you will traverse paths of rest amid the songs of seraphs and the psalms of the redeemed and that perhaps within a month. Yes, in less than it takes the moon to fill her horns you shall be where the Lord God and the Lamb are the eternal light. Certain of us are nearer heaven than we think. Let our hearts dance for joy at the bare thought of such speedy joy. Let us go on our way blessing and magnifying Him who has opened our eyes to see the glory which He has prepared for them that love Him, which shall be ours before long.

God bless you for Christ's sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—GENESIS 21:1-21.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—852, 785.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

TO MY FRIENDS IN ENGLAND,

Until yesterday the weather here has been so unsettled that it was not favorable to my complaint, but now I hope it has taken a turn for the better and will be more suitable for rheumatic joints. It has taken me six weeks to get rid of the disease and now I hope to spend the rest of my sojourn here in gathering strength. If it may please God to permit me to return in full vigor to my delightful work, I shall indeed rejoice. Till then be so good as to maintain by your prayers and liberality the good works over which I have so long presided, so that there may be no lack. College, Orphanage, Colportage, and Evangelists are all work and must not be forgotten. May the Lord's own blessing rest on them all.

Yours heartily,
C. H. SPURGEON,
Mentone, February 28, 1879

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THE YOKE REMOVED AND THE LORD REVEALED
NO. 1462

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

"They shall know that I am the Lord when I have broken the bands of their yoke."
Ezekiel 34:27.

BUT do not all men know that God is the Lord? They should know it, for He is clearly to be seen in the works of nature. Even where no revelation has come, yet heaven and earth and sea and the rain which brings with it fruitful seasons—filling men's hearts with food and gladness—all proclaim the Most High. But man by wisdom knows not God. He shuts his eyes to evidences brighter than the sun and in his willful blindness he sets up an image of wood or stone or gold or silver—bows before it and calls that his God. This is the sin of the nations that they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things.

But do not all know God in this land—this land where there is so much gospel teaching—where we boast of our open Bible and of our Protestant pulpit? Alas, no! There are multitudes who have heard of God and who say that they believe in Him, but who have no personal acquaintance with Him and do not, in the sense of the text, know that He is the Lord. Ah, dear friends, there is no knowing God except by personal acquaintance with Him. And there is no personal acquaintance with Him except by His own revealing of Himself to our spirit. You may read as much as ever you will and hear as long as ever you please, but until your own spirit comes into contact with the Spirit of God, you do not and cannot know the Lord. You know the report of Him which you have heard with the hearing of the ear, but that is a small matter unless it leads to something higher.

There are, I fear, a great many Christian people whom we must not judge, for they keep up outwardly all that is to be expected in the Christian character according to the common run of profession nowadays who, nevertheless, do not truly know God by spiritual fellowship with Him. Their faith stands upon reason—it is based upon argument and appeals to the intellect—but it has never led to personal knowledge and acquaintance. The Lord is to them a logical abstraction, not a beloved Person. Or perhaps, which is somewhat worse, their faith as to God rests upon excitement, upon association, upon the eloquence of a favorite preacher, or something of that sort. Now, in such cases as this God is not so known as He should be and after a while, if another god is preached, a different god from the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,

they leave the true God for the false. In these days of worldly wisdom, men set up a fresh deity who is more effeminate and pliable than the glorious God of Moses and of Aaron, the God of the fathers and the prophets. And straightway, those who know not the only living and true God, for there is but one, run after this new god, newly set up by these modern divines who have manufactured him in their studies as certainly as ever the Hindu manufactures mud gods by the river Ganges. They bow before this new god and cry out against the Jehovah of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as if He were to be judged by them and to be no more accounted Lord. It is amazing to hear them speak of the "stern deity of the Old Testament," and of "the semi-enlightened views of Moses and Isaiah." As for us, we heartily love Him who made known His ways unto Moses and His acts unto the children of Israel—and we desire no other God.

Those who know the Lord know that He is still the I AM THAT I AM, unchangeable in all respects. And we know that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, is the same God who revealed Himself at Paran and came with sound of thunder at Sinai. The God who manifests Himself in Jesus Christ is He who spoke to our fathers and the prophets, for He is the one glorious Lord God. Now, my brethren, there is no fear of your running after the new gods if you have once known the true God. If by experience you have been brought into fellowship with the Most High and felt His power and seen His glory, you will be confirmed in those things which He has taught you and which His Spirit has engraved upon your soul as with an iron pen and written with the point of a diamond.

It appears from the text that there is a process by which God's own people are brought to know the Lord. This process takes place when He breaks the bands of their yoke. Then they know that the Lord is God. It is clear, therefore, that He must first of all permit His own chosen, for a wise purpose, to come into bondage. They must be in bondage or else they would not wear the yoke and there would be no opportunity for the Lord to break that yoke. I do not commend the bondage—it is a thing to be deplored—but as Augustine once cried out, "Beata culpa!" "Happy fault!" when he saw how sin had made space for the wonderful display of divine grace. So I venture to say, "Blessed bondage, which gives an opportunity for our God to come in and set His children free. And by thus breaking the bands of their yoke to teach them that He Himself is the Lord."

Let us now describe, by the help of God's Spirit, who alone can teach us, this process of breaking the bands of the yoke by which the emancipated know that the Lord is God.

There are two things to be considered. First, that *the Lord does break the bands of the yoke of His people.* And secondly, that *then they know Him to be the Lord.*

It is not difficult to show that THE LORD BREAKS THE BANDS OF THE YOKE OF HIS PEOPLE, for the yokes which they wear at different times are many and in the breaking of each one of these *they learn that He is the Lord.*

You cannot forget the first yoke of which you were conscious. It was a yoke of iron—but you had worn it for many years without feeling it. A spark of divine life dropped into your bosom and then you began to perceive that *a yoke of sin, of guilt, of condemnation under the law* was firmly fixed upon your neck. If you felt as I felt, it was indeed an iron bondage and the iron entered into your soul. We can well understand the feeling of some, who when wearing this yoke wish that God had made them frogs, or toads, or snakes, or anything sooner than that they should be men and being men should be sinful and obnoxious to divine wrath. It is a horrible thing to be a sinner—and when the horror is fully perceived it brings a little hell into the soul. What stings of scorpions, or teeth of lions, or lashes of a whip of wire can be more sharp and cutting than reflections such as these—"I have sinned and cannot undo the sin. I have provoked God and can make no atonement for my provocation. I deserve His wrath and can present no plea why that wrath should not come upon me." The fabled Atlas, when the world pressed on his shoulders, was not more loaded than an awakened conscience pressed with its own iniquities. It is easy to talk of conviction of sin, but to feel it is quite another matter. It puts the soul under saws and under harrows of iron and makes it pass through the brick kiln. Sin on the conscience is a ghost which will haunt you by night as well as by day—and drive sleep away from your eyes till your soul chooses strangling rather than life. I say not that conviction is equally terrible in all cases, but some have felt this yoke to be exceedingly heavy and I believe that all God's people, when the Lord begins to deal with them to a greater or lesser degree, are bowed down beneath the oppressive bondage. Happy is the hour when the Lord breaks that yoke. He alone can remove it, but He does it most effectually—and then we know that He is Jehovah our God that brought us out of the house of bondage. To emancipate a soul from the thralldom of sin is a labor worthy of God—and to His liberating hand be glory forever and ever.

Then the awakened soul begins to be conscious of a second yoke. More or less, according to temperament and circumstances and so on, but still in each case we somewhat feel the yoke of *natural corruption* and inbred sin. The moment we become Christians, an inward battle begins. The old self will not tolerate the intruder—the new creature in Christ Jesus—and a conflict ensues. The converted man will be clean rid of some sins and scarcely ever feel a temptation to them. Notably, some men who have been given to certain evil habits have never been tempted that way again, but the flesh has taken a turn and rebelled in another direction. I have known a man, after conversion, tempted to commit a totally new sin for him and the suggestion has been a galling yoke. A passion which before he did not know to be in his soul has been awakened and he has seen the meshes of a net gradually encompassing him—then has he cried out because of the oppression put upon his sin-hating heart. If a believer has gone very deep in sin before conversion, he will often have a hard battle of it arising from the recollection of old transgressions, old habits, and old lusts. You may get the serpent out, but the slime of the reptile

still remains—it needs the sanctifying power of the Spirit of God to purge its former lurking places. If a lion has long had his lair in a thicket, the hunters may chase him out, but his den is there and likely enough, cubs will come forth when least expected. And so it is with evil in the heart of man. An old cask smells of the wine it held. It will need a great deal of scalding to sweeten it and even then, if you put pure water into it, there will soon be a taste of the old liquor about it. In certain of our petty wars, we never seem to come to an end—the natives are neither at peace nor will they keep quiet—they watch for an opportunity and break out again. It is so with the war in the Christian's soul. You may presume that sin is completely dead in you, but it laughs while you are boasting and before long it will make you weep to think that you were so readily deceived. I have known a Christian man to have a temptation come upon him and though he has not yielded to it in any degree, it has clouded his joy and put a yoke on his neck. The temptation comes. He hates it, but it comes. He goes to God and prays against it, but it comes. He watches every step he takes, but there it comes. It seems to pursue him like his shadow. He would go to the ends of the earth to get rid of it, but there it is—it dogs his footsteps. He kneels down to pray and there it is. It is like the old story of the Scotch people who thought they had ghosts in their house so moved away to be rid of them—but as they moved, they heard a noise in the butter churn—the mischievous spirits were going with them. So have we known a Christian man move and shift and try to get away from a temptation—but there it has been—the torment of his life, a sword in his bones piercing him to the heart with daily anguish. To some men of God, temptation to a certain sin has been a galling yoke for years without end. They have cried to God, with their hair almost on end for horror of the sin and yet the suggestion to the evil has thrust itself upon them, as if it would not be refused. Read in Bunyan's, "Grace Abounding," how he was haunted with that thought of selling Christ and how the words seemed to ring in his ears—"Sell Him! Sell Him! Sell Him! Sell Him! Sell Him!" till at last he inadvertently said or thought he said, "Let Him go if He will." And then the devil gloried over him and said, "You have sold Christ." For the ten thousandth time Satan was a liar in his accusations. Honest John had done nothing of the sort, but he had been so plagued and perplexed with the temptation that he scarcely knew what he said or thought. Madame Bubble, too, is difficult to shake off when she courts a poor pilgrim. Her seductions are only to be resisted on our knees and even then they give us terrible twists. You do not all understand this and I do not wish you should. But if you are now experiencing what I describe, I would have you remember that the Lord can break this yoke also and tear away each one of its bands. Very joyful is the deliverance and when it comes the text is abundantly fulfilled—"They shall know that I am the Lord when I have broken the bands of their yoke."

Another yoke which the Lord's people have too often borne is that of *a perpetual tendency to unbelief*. Unbelief lies in us all. It is *the* sin of mankind—the root sin—the taproot of all sorts of iniquity. Blessed are those who believe and are strong in faith. The Lord be praised whenever He

brings us to full assurance. But there are certain of God's people who are so very prone to unbelief that on the very slightest turn of circumstances they begin to fret. At little troubles they grow nervous and as to their own spiritual state, they appear to themselves to be in jeopardy every hour. Often the only proof of their spiritual life which they can themselves perceive is their wish to be right, their desire to avoid sin, and their longing after God. They cannot say that they have much joy or much peace through believing, neither can they expect it, for their faith is so exceedingly weak. Others call them "killjoys," because they mope and mourn so much and in truth they reflect but small credit upon their religion. They act more as scarecrows to keep others away than as attractions to draw them in. Some of the Lord's people seem to be born in the shade and to live in the shade, as if they were descended from the old troglodytes or cave dwellers and love to be buried before they are dead. This habit of mind is to be condemned, nor should any who fall into it think lightly of it. But dear friends, we must not be severe upon others or condemn them. We must, on the contrary, feel that they are putting a very heavy yoke upon themselves and that the burden weighs down their spirits and crushes the joy out of them. There are many about whose interest in Christ nobody who knows them can have any doubt at all, whose Christian consistency is beyond all question, whose prayerfulness, whose love of the Word of God, whose simple, child-like trust in Jesus Christ is manifested to everybody except themselves. They are, nevertheless, in heaviness through anxiety as to their state. Their faces shine to others, but they share not in the brightness. No one has a doubt about them, but they are full of doubts for themselves. May the Lord bring up such brethren out of their prison and then shall they know that He is the Lord when He has broken the bands of their yoke.

Some Christians are also loaded with a yoke *through great trouble.* We come together and we look cheerful and happy, but we do not know the burden of the person sitting in the pew with us. In such an assembly as this on Thursday nights, I know there is many a merchant who has come from the City where he has been driven to his wits' end all day long and he scarcely knows what he shall do. So he has said, "Well, I will just run into the house of God and I will hear what the Lord may have to say to my soul." Many and many a time a sweet promise has come home to the bewildered child of God and he has gone away feeling that the Master had sent a message to Him through His servant. I have known the housewife come up to the house of God in the same state—one child is sick and another sickening. The husband, perhaps, walking in a way that grieves the tender Christian heart of the wife and home affairs are anything but as they should be. But while she has sat before the Lord, there has come a word from the oracle of comfort and Hannah has been no sadder. Some of our brethren have a perpetual cross to carry. If we knew what they have to suffer in business, suffer in body, suffer in the domestic circle—if we knew the weight they have to carry—we should very often communicate to them words of comfort, whereas now through our not knowing, they are left unheeded and there is little or no Chris-

tian sympathy manifested. Ah, dear brother, it may be that you have been made to carry a very heavy yoke for years, but when the Lord shall break the bands of your yoke, then shall you know that He is the Lord. I can bear witness that trial has been a great blessing to me. I do not know that I have learned much except in trouble. What little I know has been whipped into me and I suspect it is so with most of my Master's family. By scourging He instructs every son that He receives. But when you have been in sore perplexity and difficulty and did not see your way out of it and could not, in fact, get out of it yourself—then have you known that the Lord was God when He has Himself appeared before you and broken the bands of your yoke. With a song you have magnified His surprising grace and blessed His delivering love.

I have not time, however, to mention all the various yokes, but I would say, next, that *many yokes which God's people bear they cannot break themselve*s. When the sinner bears the yoke of sin he cannot get it off. He may tug and tug, but he only galls himself and fixes the yoke tighter than ever. The riveted fetter of sin is not to be shaken off. Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? If so, then he who is accustomed to do evil may learn to do well by himself, apart from divine grace. The yoke of despondency of mind and very frequently, the yoke of temporal trouble will be such that a man cannot free himself from them. "Stand still and see the salvation of God," is sometimes the very best advice you can give to a man in distress. He is like a drowning man—the more he struggles, the quicker he goes down. He cannot help himself. The Lord often puts His people, on purpose, into positions where there is an end of the creature, where all carnal hope fails, where you look all around and not a single ray of light gladdens your weary eyes till the star of Bethlehem breaks forth and heralds the morning.

But dear friends, let us remember that though yokes are very many and some of them are such that we cannot possibly break them off, yet *there is no yoke but what the Lord can readily enough take from His people*. To remove the yoke of sin He brings the pardoning blood of Jesus near and our heavy load departs. As for the power of sin over us, we overcome it through the blood of the Lamb. As for our daily cares, we cast our cares on Him who cares for us. As for our despondencies of spirit, our soul has heard Him say, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me." Nothing is impossible with God and therefore, dear friends, though the peculiar form of your distress at this time is known to none but your heavenly Father and yourself, I am quite safe in saying that God can remove it in an instant if He pleases. He lifts the beggar from the dunghill and sits him among princes. He brings forth those that are bound with chains. Though you have lain among the pots, yet shall you be as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold. One of His saints of old recorded his experience in these words, "Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O God, and You heard me." His experience is that of all the captives who trust in the Lord. No condition is so dark that He cannot at once enlighten it and no case is so hopeless that He cannot instantly relieve it. Do you believe

that? Are you sure of it? Why, the very belief of that fact ought to minister comfort to your mind.

One other reflection comes to me and it is this. *We may expect the Lord to break the bands of our yoke*. If He can do it and we are His people, we may expect Him to do it. Our children look for a great deal from their fathers and I think you will find that friends and relatives frequently expect much more of you than they are likely to get—but none ever expected more of God than God has been pleased to bestow. "My soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." You know, if your child were sick and you could heal him, he would not be rash in expecting you to do it. And if your child were carrying an intolerable load and you, as his father, could release him from it, it would be only a natural expectation that he should reckon that you would do so. Oh you, then, that are oppressed—expect to be set free. Captives under the bondage of sin, since you *feel* sin to be a slavery, you are the Lord's prisoners of hope. Oh, you that have the deepest sense of guilt and have written the blackest things against yourselves, expect the Lord to set you free. If He had meant to destroy you, He would have left you to bear your sin in utter indifference and would not have convinced you of it. What can be the good of His giving you two hells—one here and another hereafter? No, He is judging you now. He is bringing you to pronounce sentence against yourself that you may plead guilty and that He may absolve you through His abounding grace. Christian, He is bringing you low; He is stripping you; He is casting you into the mire; He is beating you small as the dust of the streets and all because by this means He will make you see your nothingness and will cause you more fully to appreciate the splendor of His grace and the all-sufficiency of His power. Knowing this, faith may help us to rejoice in tribulation the moment it arrives, saying, "Here is my Father's black horse come to my door to bring me a new token of love from Him." "We glory in tribulation also knowing that tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." O ground, welcome the spade that is to turn you into a garden. O soul, welcome the affliction that is, through infinite mercy, to make you bring forth fruit unto your God. Then shall you know that the Lord is God when He has broken the bands of your yoke—and this you may expect Him to do. Thus much upon the first head, namely, that the Lord does break the bands of His people.

II. Now, secondly, WHEN HE DOES THIS, THEN THEY KNOW HIM TO BE THE LORD. Here we come to personal *experience*.

Beloved, when we have great deliverances from bondage, then we begin to see the divine attributes displayed. You all believe God to be very powerful, for you have heard His voice in the thunder and seen His might in the tempest. But when you have been brought into very deep distress and God has brought you out of it with a high hand and an outstretched arm, then you have said, "Now I see His power. No hand but His could have moved that burden and He has done it." I do not suppose that all of you can go with me in this, but you who have done business in great waters have seen the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. You

have known times when if anybody had told you that you would be delivered you would have said, "Impossible! Impossible!" Yet you have been delivered and you have cried out, "This is the finger of God. Now I know that there is a God in Israel, for He has done for me what no man could have accomplished, no, nor the angels of God." You have felt the power of God come so near to you that you have said, like Jacob, "How dreadful is this place!" Awe has overwhelmed you at the thought that God should display such power towards such an unworthy one as you, to lift you up from such depths of trouble.

You must also have seen with wonderful vividness the attribute of *wisdom.* You have been all in a snarl. You have done your best and you have made things worse. You have gone for advice and the advice has perplexed you. You have looked in all directions and the more you have looked, the less hope you have seen. And then, all of a sudden, God's finger has seemed to be put out and all the knots have been untied and His word has been fulfilled—"I will make the crooked places straight and the rough places plain." You have had clear sailing where rocks appeared to hem you in—and when you have safely passed both Scylla and Charybdis, you have magnified the divine Pilot and been astounded at His infallible wisdom. Then have you called Him, "the only wise God," and felt that He has abounded towards you in all wisdom and prudence. The path of your feet, as you have looked back upon it, has shone with mercy and you have said, "What a blessed road is this by which I have been led! I thank God that I came this way! It is the best path that ever I have trodden—the most soul-enriching track-way. What wisdom has been shown towards me! I have had a considerable trouble, but it has saved me from one a thousand times worse. I have been a great loser but, still I am a greater gainer than a loser. I would not have missed this trial though I dreaded it! I would not have missed it for a thousand worlds! No one could have told me how this was to be done, nor by what process I was to be released, but now I know that the Lord is exceedingly wise and wonderful in counsel—blessed be His name." If any caviler had answered you, "I do not believe in providence—it is all stuff and nonsense!" I do not suppose that you would have had much more patience with such a person than I should have and that is wonderfully little, for I am of the mind of a good old man to whom I was speaking yesterday, who said, "Mainly I read my Bible and having read it about 50 years and having tried it and lived by faith upon God—the modern humbug of the free-thinkers does not bother me. I know better. I never argue about it. I have lived upon the old doctrines and know the truth of them." You will see, as I quote his words, that he put it rather strongly. But I am altogether of the old man's mind. Gentlemen waste their words when they try to make me doubt the overruling presence and personal interference of the Lord in the affairs of His people. They might as well tell me that I have no father or that I never had a mother and that my parents never treated me kindly. I know what I know and I know this—the Lord is kind in all His ways and that His providence does continually interpose on behalf of His praying people. If the learned doubters cannot see a providence—well, per-

haps no special providence has been sought for by them or vouchsafed to them. If they have no God and no providence, of course they cannot bear witness to what they do not know. Let them go home and pray God to teach them. But we know that God does appear for us and are not to be beaten out of it. And we expect to accumulate much more personal evidence upon that subject between this and heaven, for we shall again suffer times of dark distress in which God will appeal for us and we shall know that He is the Lord by His breaking the bands off our neck.

The Lord's *love* is also clearly revealed in our deliverances. Have you not sat down with tears of gladness in your eyes and said to yourself, "What a God He is! Oh, what a God He is!" Have you not almost wanted to get up into a high pulpit, with the entire world around you, that you might bear witness to His grace to you on each particular occasion? My feet were almost gone, my steps had well-near slipped. I was in a great strait. I was hemmed in. I knew not what to do and I had grieved Him by my sin and wandered from Him. But though I had forgotten Him, He did not forget me. Though I was unbelieving, He was faithful. Though I was foolish, He was wise and He set my feet into a large room—therefore is my mouth opened and my heart constrains me to speak well of His name before many witnesses. I know that there are some of you who never will be able to tell what love God has manifested to you. The poet, though he strained the sense, yet spoke the truth when he said—

"But O eternity's too short
To utter half Your praise."

We shall never get through it, brothers and sisters. There is no fear of our stopping the eternal music for lack of matter, for the goodness, the grace and the love of God to us are past finding out and are altogether infinite. When we have had the bands of our yoke suddenly broken, then the divine love in its boundless length and breadth has been conspicuously before us and we have known the Lord.

Thus I might speak of each of the divine attributes, but I choose rather to pass to another topic. It is this. When the bands of our yoke have been broken, *it is often in answer to* prayer and because that liberty has come in answer to prayer, we have exclaimed, "Now I know the Lord." If you have gone to God 20 times about a thing—(no, 20 times would be nothing), if you have risen in the night watches and cried with groans and tears about your burden, if you have walked your garden or walked the streets and all the while your soul has been crying, "My Father, deliver me!" pleading every argument your soul knew with God that He would come to your rescue—then, when the rescue has come—you have known the Lord. An answered prayer is a window into God's existence, a proof of His faithfulness, an evidence of His presence. There you see that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

So again, we know Him from another reason—*the special hand of God is often seen* in the breaking of the yoke of His people—the special hand. Those who look at providences carefully will often wonder at the specialties of God about little things; for instance, about the time—the exact time. God never is before His time and He is never late. He times His

mercies to the tick of the clock. If they had come a little before, they might have been misused. If they came a little later, our spirit might have been broken and the steed might have been starved while the grass was growing. There it is—the moment the hand of the devil lifted the dart, the hand of the eternal lifted the shield so that the dart was turned aside. Wonderful are the punctualities of God. You have noticed them. I am sure you must have done so. You have met a friend by accidentally going down one street when you generally went another—and that very friend has been the one that you most needed to see. I have known what it is to go out of my way and to complain of myself for having made such a blunder and thus wasting half-an-hour—till I have seen the person that I wanted to meet above all men, but had not thought of him as the right person to inquire of—and he has told me exactly what I wanted to know. I was going the right way when I was going out of the way. But often it is so, and so you shall find it and you shall have to lift up your hands and say, "Now also do I know the Lord—time, place, circumstances, words, little petty details, small things—He has had a hand in them all." "Blessed be God," I said to a dear one today, "for our great God, that He loves us in great troubles." "And," she replied, "blessed be His name that nothing is too little for Him." So do I say tonight. Blessed be His name for breaking the little bands of our yoke and for removing the great yokes by such small but effectual means. We most admire those little touches which are so omnipotent. The magicians of Egypt turned water into blood, or pretended to do it, and they brought forth frogs—but when once Aaron began to make the dust into tiny life, they could not counterfeit the wonder and they said, "This is the finger of God." Frequently by minute marvels God reveals Himself most clearly to the secret souls of His people and they hear in His still small voice more of His mind than in His thunder and mighty wind.

Dear friends, if you have passed through any great and special deliverances, you will join with me in feeling that the presence of God is often vividly perceived. I fear that the presence of God is not often felt as it ought to be at a dinner table when a number of people are met together and are enjoying themselves. But I remember my feeling the presence of God at a dinner table on a memorable occasion. There was a very large sum of money to be paid for the building of the Orphanage and I was up with certain friends at Regent's Park—dining at the house of one of our brothers. I there mentioned that I was short of some 2,000 pounds to meet an account which would very soon be due, but that I was sure that God would graciously give it, for it was His work and He would supply its needs in answer to prayer. We were discussing as to whether it was not rather bold to speak too positively about answers to a prayer of such a kind and while we were still discoursing, there came a telegram from the Tabernacle to me, saying, "A person unknown has called and left 2,000 pounds in bank notes for the Orphanage." I read the telegram to the friends assembled and their gratitude and astonishment abounded. My dear old friend, Dr. Brock, who is now with God, said, "Put down your knives and forks and let us bless the name of the Lord." And he stood up

and poured out His heart in a most wonderful manner in devout thankfulness to the Answerer of prayer. We all heartily joined in that act of devotion. The Lord was there—we felt His presence as much as if it had been a sacramental supper, for the Lord had drawn so near to us. If someone had said to us just then, "Well, you know, this is a coincidence, a mere coincidence," we should have laughed and I, for one, would have said, "It is a very blessed coincidence and I hope it will go on coinciding, for truly it coincides with the promise and with my faith in God." The devil does not give his followers such coincidences. Let me say that I have prayed and God has heard me and if that is only a coincidence, it has happened so many hundreds and thousands of times to me, and I suppose to you also, beloved, that we are not to be cheated out of a demonstrated fact by the unbeliever's impudent theories.

We can boldly say, "Now I know the Lord, for He has broken the bands of my yoke in answer to prayer and I have felt Him near." Yes, and we feel Him so near that often we are obliged to utter words of praise. See what the Israelites did when they had been in Egypt making bricks without straw and seeing their male children destroyed by a merciless tyrant. It was a happy, happy time for them when at midnight they came out of Egypt. Do you wonder, after they had crossed the Red Sea and Pharaoh and his chariots had all been drowned in the midst of it, that when they saw their enemies dead upon the shore, Miriam took her timbrel and all the daughters of Israel went forth with music chanting, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea"? "Be quiet, good women. The philosophers have discovered that God is the 'totality of existence,' and that He has no personality and consequently never interferes with the fixed laws of matter. You must not believe that He drowned those Egyptians by His own act and deed. It was an extraordinary natural phenomenon which occasionally happens just about that time and place. You ought rather to wonder at the marvelous laws of gravitation by which these Egyptians have sunk under the water." Thus some superfluously wise fool might have prated to the women of Israel. But what would they have thought of him? What would Miriam have said to that? Modern philosophers explain all miracles away and Colenso with a slate figures the whole story of the Exodus into thin air. What would Moses have said to him for a bishop? In the presence of that miracle, with their shoulders still red with the lash, their faces still grimed with the brick dust, conscious that they had been in bondage and knew it—and were now free and that none but the eternal Jehovah could have set them free—the sons of Jacob would have pitched the philosophers into the Red Sea along with the Egyptians. I almost wish they were there, for they are of no use among us nowadays. Infinite mercy lets the creatures live, but we shall not cease from our glorying in our God because of what they call their criticism. In our case is fulfilled the promise, "They shall know that I am the Lord when I break the bands of their yoke."

Beloved, if you do not know the Lord personally, do not talk about Him, nor pretend to know Him. But if you do *know* Him, be not afraid of

being called dogmatic because you speak confidently. Read the Epistles of John and see how the beloved disciple harps upon that word. He says, "We know," "We know," "We know," "We know." The word occurs perhaps 40 times in that short Epistle. Know what you do know, and when you know it, do not be driven from it, but let the text be fulfilled in your experience, *"They shall know* that I am the Lord when I have broken the bands of their yoke." If your sins have been forgiven, if you have been brought up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, if you have been delivered from the power of sin, so as "to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord," or aim at it, and if you have been blessed in providence with answers to prayer and many a time rescued as from between the lion's jaws, then say, "The Lord lives and blessed be my rock and I will walk by faith in Him. As for others, let them say what they will and doubt what they please—my soul follows hard after the Lord, for His right hand upholds me."

There I leave the subject, praying that every one of you may have the bands of your yoke broken, for then shall you know the Lord and not till then. The Lord bless you evermore. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—EZEKIEL 34

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—708, 126, 660.

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

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THE GAZELLES AND THE DEER

NO. 1463A

A SERMON
WRITTEN AT MENTONE
BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"By the gazelles or by the deer of the field."
Solomon's Song 2:7 (NKJV).

(The original title of this sermon is THE ROES and THE HINDS).

THE spouse was in the full enjoyment of fellowship with her Beloved. Her joy was so great as almost to overpower her and yet so nearly does fear tread upon the heels of joy, she was filled with dread lest her bliss should come to an end. She feared lest others should disturb her Lord, for if He were grieved, she would be grieved also, and if He departed the banquet of her delight would be over. She was afraid even of her friends, the daughters of Jerusalem. She knew that the best can interrupt fellowship as well as the worst and therefore she entreated even Zion's daughters not to sin against Zion's King. Had they awakened her Beloved and broken His sacred peace, she would not have found a recompense in their company, but would rather have regarded them with scorn for having robbed her of her chief delight. The entreaty which she used is a choice specimen of oriental poetry—she charges them, not as we should prosaically do, by everything that is sacred and true—but "by the gazelles and by the deer of the field." So far as we understand her meaning, we will endeavor to profit by it during our brief meditation. It touches one of the most mysterious points of the secret life of the believer and we shall much need the guidance of the Holy Spirit while we endeavor to open up its meaning.

"The gazelles and the deer of the field" are creatures of great BEAUTY. Who can gaze upon them as they wander among the ferns without an inward admiration? Now, since nothing can be lovelier than communion

with Jesus, the spouse exhorts the daughters of Jerusalem by all the loveliest objects in nature to refrain from disturbing it. No one would wish to drive away the gazelle, but would feast his eyes upon it and yet its graceful elegance can never be compared with that beauty of holiness, that comeliness of grace which is to be seen in fellowship with Jesus. It is beautiful from both sides. It is a lovely display of condescension for our beloved Lord to reveal Himself to us and on the other hand, it is a charming manifestation of every admirable virtue for a believer to enter into fellowship with his Lord. He who would disturb such mutual communion must be devoid of spiritual taste and blind to all which is most worthy of admiration.

As one delights to see the red deer in the open glades of the forest and counts them the finest ornaments of the scene, so do men whose eyes are opened rejoice in the saints whose high communion with heaven renders them beings of superior mold to common mortals. A soul in communion with its God is the admiration of angels. Was ever a lovelier sight seen than Jesus at the table with the beloved disciple leaning on His bosom? Is not Mary sitting at our Master's feet a picture worthy of the choicest art? Do nothing then O you who joy in things of beauty to mar the fellowship in which the rarest beauty dwells. Neither by worldly care, nor sin, nor trifling, makes even the slightest stir which might break the Beloved's repose. His restful presence is heaven below and the best foretaste of heaven above—in it we find everything that is pure, lovely, and of good report. It is good and only good. Why, then, O daughters of Jerusalem, should you stir up our Beloved and cause His adorable excellence to be hidden from us? Rather join with us in preserving a joy so fair, a bliss so comely.

The next thought suggested "by the gazelles or by the deer of the field"—is that of TENDER INNOCENCE. These gentle creatures are so harmless, so defenseless, and so timid that he must have a soulless soul who would do them harm or cause them fright. By all, then, that is tender, the spouse beseeches her friends not to disturb her Beloved. He is so good, so kind, so holy, harmless and undefiled that the most indifferent ought to be ashamed to molest His rest. About Him there is nothing to

provoke offense and everything to forbid it. He is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off His hair. He hid not His face from shame and spitting. Being reviled, He reviled not again, but in His death agonies He prayed for His enemies. Who, then, could find cause for offense in Him? Do not His wounds ward off the blows which might be challenged had He been of another character? Who will wish to vex the Lamb of God? Go elsewhere, you hunters! "The hind of the morning" has already sweat great drops of blood falling to the ground. When dogs compassed Him and the assembly of the wicked enclosed Him, He felt the full of grief—will you afflict Him yet again?

In fellowship with Jesus there is a tenderness which ought to disarm all opposition and even command respectful deference. A soul communing with the Son of God challenges no enmity. The world may rise against proselyting zeal, or defiant controversy, or ostentatious ceremonialism—for these have prominence and power and are fair game for martial spirits—but fellowship is quiet, retiring, unobtrusive, harmless. The saints who most abound in it are of a tender spirit, fearful to offend, nonresistant and patient—surely it would be a superfluity of cruelty to wish to deprive them of their unselfish happiness which deprives no hearer a drop of pleasure and costs no eye a tear. Rather let even those who are most indifferent to religion pay a generous respect to those who find their delight in it. Though the worldling may care nothing for the love which overpowers the believer's ravished spirit, let him tread with reverent care when he passes the closet of devotion or hears a stray note from the song of meditative gratitude. Rough men have paused when they have suddenly come upon a fair gazelle grazing in a secluded spot—they are so charmed at the sight of such tender loveliness they have scarcely dared to move a foot lest they should alarm the gentle animal. And some such feeling may well forbid the harsh criticism or the vulgar laugh when even the infidel beholds a sincere heart in conversation with its Lord. As for those of us who know the blessedness of fellowship with Jesus, it behooves us to be doubly jealous of our words and deeds, lest in a single instance we offend one of the Redeemer's little ones and cause him to

lose even for an hour his delight in the Lord. How often are Christians careless about this, till at the sight of some professors the more spiritual may well take alarm and cry out in anguish, "I charge *you,* O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the deer of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my love, till He please."

A third thought most certainly had place in the mind of the anxious spouse. She meant to adjure and persuade her friends to silence by everything which sets forth LOVE. The lilies and the gazelles have always been sacred to love. The poet of the Canticles had elsewhere used the symbol of the text to set forth married love. "Let her be as the loving deer and pleasant doe" (Prov 5:19). If ever there was true love in this entire selfish world, it is the love of Jesus first, and next the love of His people. As for His love, it passes the love of women—many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it. And as for the love of the church, He who best knows it says, "How fair is your love, My sister, My spouse! How much better is your love than wine; and the smell of your ointment than all spices!" If love, therefore, may plead immunity from war and ask to have its quietude respected, the spouse used a good argument when she pleaded, "by the gazelles or by the deer of the field," that her royal Bridegroom's rest of love might not be invaded. If you love, or are loved, or wish to be loved, have a reverent regard for those who commune with Jesus, for their souls take their fill of love—and to drive them from their bliss would be inexcusable barbarity. O you, who have any hearts to feel for others, do not cause the bitterest sorrow by depriving a sanctified soul of the sweetest of delights. Draw not near here with idle tales, or wanton speech, or empty mirth—the place where you stand is holy ground—for surely God is in that place where a heart enamored of the altogether Lovely One delights itself in the Lord.

O that all believers were so anxious to retain the enjoyment of divine love that they would warn off every intruder, whoever he might be. The daughters of Jerusalem were welcome to visit the spouse at fitting times. She even on another occasion bade them carry a message for her to her Beloved One and gave them a full description of His surpassing charms, but when her Lord was with her at the banquet, she only asked of them

that they would not come between her and the sunshine of His presence. Nor do we wonder at her jealous fear, for we have had a sip of those sweets which she had tasted and we would sooner lose all else than lose the luxury of divine love. It is such joy as cannot be imagined by those who have never partaken of it. It is such joy as can never be rivaled even in the paradise above, if in that place there is any other joy than that which springs from divine love. Let none, then, deprive us of its continued enjoyment. By the sanctities of true love let every friendly mind assist us to preserve the hallowed quiet so essential to communion with our Lord.

Once more, upon the very surface of the figure lies the idea of *delicate sensitiveness*. The gazelles or the deer of the field are soon away if anything disturbs them. In this respect they represent the speediness with which the Beloved departs when He is annoyed by sin. He is as a gazelle or a young deer for this quality among many others that while He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills, He also soon withdraws Himself, and the Lord our God is a jealous God. In proportion to the fire of love is the heat of jealousy and therefore our Lord Jesus will not brook a wandering affection in those greatly beloved ones to whom He manifests Himself. It needs constant watchfulness to maintain constant fellowship. Hence the spouse entreats and beseeches those who came near her not to give offense to her Lord. They might do this unwittingly, hence she warns them. They might do it in wanton carelessness, hence she "charges" them. She would have them speak softly and move gently, lest He should be disturbed. Should we not feel the same anxiety that nothing in our families or in any of our relations or connections should be tolerated by us so as to envelope us in the wrong and grieve our Lord? Should we not especially watch every thought of our mind, desire of our heart, word of our tongue and deed of our hand lest any of these should offend Him and break our rapturous communion? If we would be favored above others we must be more on our guard than others are. He who becomes "a man greatly beloved" must keep his heart with sevenfold diligence, for to whom much is given of him much will be required. Kings will bear from common subjects' behavior which could

not be endured in favorites. That which might cause but slight pain from an enemy, will sorely wound if it comes from a friend. Therefore, the favored spouse may well use in her entreaty the name of the most tenderly susceptible of love's favorites and plead, "by the gazelles or by the deer of the field."

Dear friend, do you know what communion with Jesus means? If so, imitate the spouse whenever you are in the enjoyment of it. Be jealous of yourself and all around you that the Well-Beloved may not be vexed. Aim at the maintenance of life-long communion. Remember how for centuries Enoch walked with God—our lives are but a span compared with his—why should we not always come up from the wilderness leaning on our Beloved? The Holy Spirit has almighty power. Let us ask and receive that our joy may be full.

If you do not understand this precious secret, may the Lord reveal it to you even now. You must first receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior or you can never know Him as your Bridegroom. Faith must trust Him before love can embrace Him. You must be brought to be washed or you can never be brought to be banqueted. Pant after the Redeemer as the hart pants after the water brooks and when you have drank of the water of life then shall you be as a hind let loose. Then, too, your feet shall be like deer' feet and you shall be set upon your high places. When this shall have been made your own by experience, you shall understand the text and shall also breathe the prayer of another verse of the same song, "Make haste, my beloved, and be like to a gazelle or young deer upon the mountains of spices."

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THE RISING SUN
NO. 1463B

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

"But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall."
Malachi 4:2.

THE Jews expected that the coming of the Messiah would exalt every one of the Israelite race. Their expectations were great, but they were also carnal and sensuous since they looked for an earthly king who would make the despised nation victorious over all its enemies and enrich every man of Abraham's race. The Scriptures gave them no ground for such universal expectations, but quite the reverse. In the chapter which is now before us, the prophet explains that the coming of Christ would certainly be like the rising of the sun, full of glory and of brightness, but the results would not be the same to all. To those who thought that they were righteous and despised others, but who were wicked in their conversation—the rising of that sun would bring a burning, withering day. Read the first verse, "The day comes that shall burn as an oven and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble." They shall not be like plants full of sap that would flourish in the tropical heat, but like stubble which becomes drier and drier until it takes fire—"and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord, that it shall leave them neither root nor stock," for so might it be translated, and then the figure would be congruous throughout. It would scorch up the stubble in which there was no life, so intense would be the heat. Now that was the consequence of Christ's coming. The religion of the Jews at His coming was dry and dead, like stubble. The Pharisee thought that he was righteous because he put on a broad phylactery, tithed anise and mint, cumin, and such trifles. The Sadducee thought much of himself because he was a man of common sense, a thinker, a rationalist. And other sects of that period found equally frivolous grounds for glorying. The ministry of Christ dried them right up and they have ceased to be. We use the name of Pharisee and Sadducee today, but there is no person in the world who would like to wear either name. The result of Christ's coming, by His Spirit as well as by His personal advent, is always much the same.

Should the Spirit of God visit this church with revival it will not have an equally beneficial effect upon all. To some, the rising of this Sun will bring healing and blessing, but to others it will bring scorching and withering. Know you not that the summer which fills the corn and makes it hang its golden head, blushing in very modesty for the blessing which has come upon it, fetches up also the noxious weeds from their secret lairs? Tares gather encouragement from the sun as well as does the wheat, and so the bad come to their ripeness as well as the good. But the ripeness of that which is bad is only a hurrying on to destruction—the dryness of the stubble is the preparation for its being utterly consumed. We may well pray for revival, but we must not suppose that to the mere formalist a revival will bring a blessing. It may possibly disgust him and drive him from religion altogether. He will discover that he has no true religion as he sees the work of the Spirit of God around him and so the day of the Lord will to him "burn as an oven"—and being proud and at the same time doing wickedly, his empty profession of religion will consume like the stubble.

The coming of the Messiah was to bring to another class a fullness of blessing and it is of these we have to speak. "But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise," not with scorching, but "with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth"—you shall not be dried up, burnt, and destroyed—but you shall "grow up as calves of the stall." You shall obtain great blessings through the presence of your Lord. Two things will take up our attention. The first is, *the description of the people of God*—"Unto you that fear My name." And the second is, *the blessing which is promised to them*—"the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall."

I. Here are TRUE SAINTS DESCRIBED. Let us look at them. The description may be divided into two parts. First, here is their abiding character—they fear the name of the Lord—and secondly, we gather from the text their occasional character, a character which is not always theirs, but into which they sometimes fall, namely, that they need healing, for were they not sick there would be no need of the promise that the Sun of righteousness should arise upon them with healing in His wings.

Notice then, first, *their abiding character*—they fear the name of the Lord. I am delighted to think that this promise is given to this particular character, for it thus comes to beginners in grace. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"—it is not the highest grace, nor the loftiest attainment of the spiritual nature. Bless the Lord, therefore, you weak and feeble ones, that the promise is given to you. You fear the Lord. There are

times when we ask ourselves whether we know the rapture of love and we greatly question whether we ever had the assurance of faith, but even then, we know that we have an awe of God. Jonah in the ship was in a very sinful state of mind and was fleeing from God, but yet he did not hesitate to say, "I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord." This is the abiding character of the saints in their worst state. If they backslide, they still fear the name of the Lord. They fear it at times very slavishly, with the spirit of bondage, but they fear it. They lose the evidence of their sonship and they cease to walk in the light, but they still have a fear of the Most High—they do not treat Him lightly, they could not sin against Him cheaply—there is still within their hearts a sense of His greatness. It generally assumes the form of a reverence of His person. They know there is a God and they are sure that He made the heavens and the earth. They are equally clear that He is everywhere present, marking the ways of men. Others may blaspheme, but they cannot; others may sin and make merry with it, but sin costs them dear; others may feast themselves without apprehension, but they cannot, for they fear the Lord. I know that this expresses all true religion and has a very comprehensive meaning, but it suits my purpose just now to view it as a description of believers, which is true of them all, into whatever state they may come. They still fear the Lord. Now, soul, do you *tremble* before God? There is something in that. I do not ask you whether you tremble at hell. That were no sign of grace, for what thief will not tremble at the gallows? I do not ask you if you are afraid of death. What mortal man is not, unless he has a good hope through divine grace? But do you tremble in the presence of God because you have offended Him? And do you tremble in the presence of sin lest you should offend Him? Does it ever come over you thus—"How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Just as some men are kept back from crime by the fear of the law, are you kept back from folly by the fear of God? Just as some are impelled to energy by the fear of poverty, so are you impelled to the divine service by a sense of the fact that not to serve Him is to abide under His wrath? It is a low and small matter compared with the higher graces which God works in His people, but it is still a precious thing to tremble even at His Word. I am glad to think that many of you have lately begun to fear God. I bless His name that you cannot live now as you once did. You are uneasy in your former careless way. I am right glad of it and though I cannot be sure that this fear may not be a slavish fear, yet I hope for the best and pray that it may ripen into that real fear of God which is always a work of grace in the soul, so that the promise of our text may belong to you.

Now, beloved, I have said that the description which is here given of the people of God denotes not only their abiding character, that they fear the Lord, but it also mentions their *occasional* character. They sometimes fall into a condition which they deplore and the text intimates this, first, by the fact that the Sun of righteousness is to arise upon them, for this implies that they were in the dark until then. Whatever other light there may be, we every one of us know that until the sun rises our condition is one of comparative darkness. There are children of God who walk in darkness, dear children of God, too. Indeed, I am inclined to think that every child of God gets into the dark sometimes. Some begin with brightness and then they get a cloudy time in the middle of their experience; while others have their worst darkness at last. Knox and Luther had their sharpest temptations when they came to die. It has been well said that God sometimes puts His children to bed in the dark. It does not matter, for they wake up in the light—in the eternal morning. But a dark season usually happens to us somewhere between the new birth and heaven—perhaps to make the brightness all the brighter when the night shall be forever ended. Are you in the dark at this moment, dear brother, and are you wondering at it because everybody else seems so lively in their religion? Dear sister, does it seem to you as if, though you have been a believer for years, you were never in a worse state than now, while others are rejoicing? Then ask yourself—Do you still fear the Lord? Is your soul humbled in the presence of His majesty and have you a desire for His glory? Never despair. The Sun shall rise upon you soon.

Very clear is it from the text, too, that the children of God may sometimes be in ill health, for the Sun of righteousness is to arise upon them with healing in His wings, which would not be so necessary a promise if they were not sick. A Christian may be bowed down with grievous spiritual maladies. His pulse may beat slowly; his heart may become feeble; he may be alive and that may be about all. Lethargy may seize him; palsy may make him tremble despondently. He may have wandered from his God. Alas, even a feverish fit may be upon him, in which he shakes with unbelief from head to foot! It may be his eyes have become so blinded that he cannot see afar off and his ears may be dull of hearing. He may be like the fools in the psalm whose souls abhorred all manner of meat. He may have put away from him the comforts of the promises and he may be brought very low—yet he shall not die, but live and proclaim the works of the Lord—for the soul sickness of a saint is not unto death. He shall be recovered from it and he shall sing of the Lord whose name is, "Jehovah Rophi, the Lord that heals you." Oh, child of God, if you are in

a sick and sorrowing state, cry mightily unto your Lord and the Sun of righteousness shall arise upon you with healing in His wings.

Note, again, that the children of God, according to our text, may be in a condition of bondage, for it is said that when the Sun of righteousness arises, "they shall go forth as calves of the stall." Understand the figure. The calf in the stall is shut up, tied up with a halter at night, but when the sun rises, the calf goes forth to the pasture. The young bullock is set free. So the child of God may be in bondage. The remembrance of past sins and present unbelief may halter him up and keep him in the stall, but when the Lord reveals Himself, he is set free. Even true children of God may sometimes have to cry like Paul that they are sold under sin. They may forget the blood of redemption for a season and think themselves still to be slaves—and yet they are the true children of God. Hence the beauty of the promise that they shall go forth.

Yes, and there is more in the text. The children of God may be in such a state that they are not growing, for else we should not have the promise, "You shall go forth and grow up" when the Sun of righteousness shall shine. Do you, my dear brother, feel as if you had not grown in grace for months? You need the Sun of righteousness to shine upon you and you will grow as the plants do. The trees are all bare in winter and their branches apparently dead—but bring us the spring sun and the buds will begin to swell, the leaves will appear, and the trees shall blossom and yield fruit. So shall it be with you.

The Lord has not left you. You may have stayed in your growth awhile, but you shall grow again.

Once more, the child of God may get into such a condition that he has lost his joy, for I will tell you a secret about the text—it might be and probably ought to be translated, for the Septuagint has it so and the Hebrew has that force, "They shall go forth *and leap like calves of the stall."* The young cattle may have been kept under cover in the winter, but when the sun brings the spring, the fields are green and you let the calves loose. There is joy about the creatures' movements. Even so, when the Lord appears to His people, they move with delight and dance for joy of heart. The Lord's love within them shall make them give expression to their joy. I pray that you may feel this intense delight in gospel liberty and leap for joy. Thus I have described the people to whom the promise comes.

II. My second and most pleasing duty is TO OPEN UP THE PROMISE ITSELF. "The Sun of righteousness shall arise." Child of God in the dark, in prison, ungrowing, and unhappy, what a promise is here for you! "The Sun of righteousness shall arise." His rising is to do it all. There is noth-

ing for you to do—no works for you to perform in order to get the needed blessing. The Sun of righteousness shall arise. Now, the rising of the sun is one of the most wonderful things in nature, not merely for its grandeur and beauty, but for its sublime display of strength. Who could hold back the horses of the sun? What hand could block the golden wheel of his chariot, or bid him stay his course? The time is come for him to rise and lo, he delights the world with dawn. Holy Spirit, such is Your power. When it is Your time to work, who can stand against You? As the sun floods the whole earth with his splendor and no power can hinder his movements, so will the Holy Spirit work and none can stop Him. Plead then, this promise tonight and cry—"O Sun of righteousness, arise upon those that fear You. Come in all Your majesty and wealth of grace. Pour upon us Your light and heat and life and fill this place with Your glory."

Now mark what will be the result of His rising. As soon as ever this Sun is up and Christ begins to shine upon His people, they enjoy a clear light. They were in the dark before, but they are in the light, now. I have been living for a while in a country where the sun is everything. The temperature and the atmosphere are made healthful and delicious, I had almost said celestial, by his presence. When he shines not, the sick pine and the healthy are gloomy. But when clouds no longer veil his face, we are as in the garden of the Lord. Everything depends upon the sun. Step down into a valley where he has not shone and you will find frost—cross the street into the shade and you shiver in the cold. So clear does the atmosphere become through the removal of all fogs and mists that sometimes we have seen a hundred miles across the sea, rising up like a fair vision, the distant mountains of Corsica. I cannot help using the illustration because it is so distinctly before me. When the Sun of righteousness arises upon a Christian and shines full upon him, he does not see islands a hundred miles away, but he sees the golden gates of the Celestial City, the King in His beauty, and the land that is very far off—for the presence of Christ endears the atmosphere and enables us to see the invisible. Unto you that fear His name may the Sun of righteousness arise and give you just such clearness and light.

But according to the text, the Sun of righteousness, when He rises on those that fear the Lord, gives them healing. There is healing in His wings. By the wings of the sun are meant the beams that shoot up from it into the air or seem to slant down from it when it is aloft in the sky. There is really healing to men's bodies in the sun. Have we not seen them come to the sunny land consumptive, doubled with weakness—and as they have sat in the sun and warmed themselves for a few weeks, the wounds within the lungs have begun to heal and the consumptive man

has breathed again and you have seen that he would live. Some have gone there who scarcely could speak and beneath the sun they began to speak again, like men whose youth has been renewed. The sun is the great physician. Where he enters not, the physician will be needed, but where he shines, men speedily revive. As for the Sun of righteousness, oh, how He heals the sick! I would like you sick Christians to sit in His sunlight by the year together, if you did nothing else but bask there as animals delight to bask in the sun. The flowers know the sun and they turn their cups to him and drink in of the health he gives them from his golden store. Oh, that we had as much sense to know the Sun of righteousness that we might by prayer, meditation, and holy living, bask and sun ourselves in His delicious beams. We shall be strong indeed if He rises upon us with healing in His wings. He has risen, but we wander into the shade. He has risen, but we get into the ice wells of worldliness and sin—and shut out His warmth—and then we wonder why we are sick, but sick we always shall be till we come out into the light again and Jesus shines on us from morn till eve.

I must not enlarge upon any one point, for my time is limited, but I would have you notice how the text says that when the Sun of righteousness shines, the Christian gets his liberty. "You shall go forth." I have been staying where the invalid does not venture out if the wind blows and if there is a little chill and the sun is not bright he must stay indoors or lose the benefit he has received. But when the sun is out and the air is calm, then he goes forth and leaves his bedroom and is all alive once more. There are Christians who have been kept indoors a long time. They have not walked the length of the promise, nor spied out the breadth of the covenant, nor climbed to the top of Pisgah to gaze upon the landscape. O beloved, if the Sun of righteousness, even the Lord Jesus, shall shine upon you, you will go forth not only to enjoy Christian life, but to enter into Christian service—and you will go further afield to bring others to Christ.

Then you will begin to grow. That is another effect of the sun and how wonderfully the sunlight makes things grow. Here we have in our hothouses little plants that we think so wonderful that we show them to our friends and put them on our tables as rarities. But I have seen them in the sunny south 10 times as large growing in the open fields because the sun has looked upon them. The rarities of our country are the commonplaces of the land of the sun. I have known Christians who have received a little faith and been perfectly astonished at it—and God has blessed them with a little love to Jesus—and they have felt as though they were splendid saints. But if they lived in the sunlight they might move moun-

tains by their faith and their love would lead them to devote their whole life to Jesus—and yet they would not be astonished. The Sun of righteousness can produce fruits rich and rare. Our cold, sunless land, beneath its cloud and fog—what can it yield in the winter? In more favored parts of the earth, even in our winter, the trees are golden with fruits. So is it with the soul. What can it grow if it lives in worldliness? What can it produce if it lives to itself? But when it knows the love of Jesus and the power of His grace, even in its worst estate it brings forth the richest and the rarest fruit to the glory of His grace.

I shall close by exhorting my fellow church members to live in the sunlight. Get out of the shadows. There are dreary glens in this world where the sun never shines—they are called glens of pleasure and sometimes the pale moon looks down on them with sickly ray. But the saint knows the light of the sun from the light of the world's moon. Get away from those chill places into the clear light. "But," says one, "I did not know there were joys in religion." My dear friend, do you know true religion then? For it is "a thing of beauty and a joy forever." He who knows Christ has seen the sun, but till he has known Him, he has seen but the glowworm's glitter. Peace, deep peace, he never knew who never knew the power of the blood. And joy, real joy, such as angels call joy, he never knew who never trusted in the Savior's atoning sacrifice. Oh, come you depressed and distressed and despondent ones whose religion has been slavery and whose profession has been bondage—get a true baptism into Christ by faith in Him and when you have been plunged into the Godhead's deepest sea, then shall you know a joy and peace which pass all understanding. The world gives them not—it cannot take them away. "Unto you that fear the Lord, the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings."

I would to encourage those who fear the Lord a little, I mean the seekers. Come into the light. Come and welcome. None will question your right. I never heard of anybody yet who said, "I must not sit in the sun. The sun is not mine." The lords of this world have hedged in every acre and there is scarcely a sterile mountainside which is not guarded with "Trespassers beware." But they cannot hedge in the blessed sunlight. No, not even for an hour. Through the poor man's window, though the glass is broken and stuffed up with rags, a beam of sunlight will pierce its way as gladly as into the halls of monarchs. It shines on the beggar's rags as well as on the prince's scarlet and it is free. When Diogenes bade Alexander get out of his sunlight, he had a right to do so, for the sunlight belonged as much to Diogenes in his tub as to Alexander who had conquered a world. O meanest of the mean in your own judgment; lowest of

the low in your own esteem; guiltiest of the guilty as your conscience calls you before God—know that the Sun of righteousness has risen and His light is free. Come into the sunlight! Come into the sunlight! "Oh, but I shall get better soon. I am sick, but I shall get better soon." Come into the sunlight, man, for there is healing beneath the wings of the Sun of righteousness, but nowhere else. "I am kindling a fire. I am hoping that I may get warm by the sparks of my own kindling." Come into the sunlight, man. What were all your fires? Though you should set Lebanon upon a blaze and take all the timber that ever grew on Sirion to make a pile, what were it as compared with yonder mighty furnace of the sun which has burnt on for ages and will burn on till the last eye of mortal man shall have looked upon it? O soul, go not about with your whims and your fancies to save yourself, but come into the sunlight! Come into the sunlight, man! "But perhaps I may not." Who is the poorer if the sunlight shines on you? There is enough for others even though it pours its floods on you. The sun is no brighter if you have not his beams. He will be no duller though you and a thousand like you should lie by the century together basking in his light. So with Jesus. "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." If you take all the mercy that can be needed to lift you up from the gates of hell to heaven itself, He will have as much mercy left. If all the merit you can need to save your condemned spirit and make you into a child of God should be yours, as I pray it may, there will be as much merit left in Christ as ever. Why keep back? Why keep back? "But I am so base." Does not the sun shine on dunghills? May not the mercy of God shine on you, you dunghill sinner? You cannot be too low. You cannot be too vile. The infinite mercy of God, like the infinite light of the sun, can reach you. "Alas, I am dark." And what night was too dark for the sun to turn it into day? "Alas, I am cold." But what iceberg was too cold for the sun to thaw it? What winter was too severe for the sun to turn it into summer? Yield yourself up, you icicle. Yield to the sun and it will melt you. Yield yourself up, you dead and shriveled twig, to that dear sunbeam which waits to kiss you and it will awaken life within you and warm you till you shall be loaded with rich fruit, to the praise and glory of the Sun of righteousness which has risen upon you. The Lord grant it may be so with us all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MALACHI 3, 4.

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LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR FRIENDS—Although I am still weak upon my knees, I am so greatly refreshed in spirit that I feel able to return to preach on Sunday, April 13. Glad tidings of the Lord's work at home have greatly cheered me and I am also rejoiced that most of the work committed to me has prospered during my absence. This is a great point gained, for now all will know that the work is a living one and does not depend upon personal oversight. I heartily thank all the workers and givers, and most of all our gracious God who has kept them faithful.

Right glad shall I be to see the beloved Tabernacle people again. I beg to be daily remembered in prayer and I am

Yours to serve,

C.H. SPURGEON
Mentone, March 14, 1879

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

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A REFRESHING PROMISE
NO. 1464

A SERMON
WRITTEN AT MENTONE
BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"I will water it every moment,"
Isaiah 27:3.

WHEN the Lord is most intent on justice He is at the same time earnest in His love. The day of vengeance of our God is also the acceptable year of the Lord. In the Scripture before us, the prophet says, "Behold, the Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity," (Isa 26:21) and he foretells that the Lord will come forth as one armed with a great and strong sword to smite the fiercest of His enemies with a deadly wound (Isa 27:1). Yet before He had bared His arm for the battle, He prepared chambers of refuge for His people that they might dwell as within closed doors until the tempest of indignation was past (Isa 26:20). The shouts of war did not prevent the Lord from remembering His beloved and His song of love concerning her, for He says, "In that day sing you unto her, a vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment." Happy people who even in the day of wrath are satisfied with favor; blessed heirs of grace who hear the just and terrible avenger say concerning them, "Fury is not in Me" (v 4).

The love of the Lord towards His whole church goes forth to each individual member—the care which He displays towards the vineyard is exercised upon each vine which He has planted. So then we may without hesitation believe that the Lord will do for us personally that which He promises to do for His people as a whole. Or else there would have been exceptions stated and the word of God would have run thus—I will water a part of My vineyard, but a portion of the plants shall be left to be dried up." The Lord's word is so truthful that it would never raise ungrounded expectations by general statements if there were indeed cases not included therein. We are always safe in concluding that if the Lord had meant to shut out one believing soul from a privilege, He would have mentioned it, for He has not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth, anything

which would deny the happiness of any one of His people. This then, beloved friends, is the pledge of love concerning the spiritual life of my soul and yours—and the soul of every humble believer in Jesus—"I will water it every moment." This is a precious promise and the more we meditate upon it, the richer it will appear. May we now be watered by the Holy Spirit while we meditate upon this promised watering.

In warm climates irrigation is essential to fertility, therefore travelers see on all sides, pools and watercourses, wheels, cisterns and channels for the water to flow in. The watering arises from necessity and it is carefully attended to because otherwise the farmer or gardener would look in vain for fruit. I remarked to a gardener in the South of France that the weather was bad, but he replied that it was good for the garden, for the rain gave plenty of water and that was the chief thing. In Paradise it was no mean advantage to its verdant bowers that a fourfold river pursued its course through its midst and that before the rain had fallen upon the earth there went up a mist from the earth and watered the face of the ground. From the necessity and value of water to the plants of the earth, the Lord would teach us our own need of His grace and the preciousness of that grace—and render His promise of supply the more delightful to our souls.

That we may prize the goodness of the Lord in the promises before us, we shall consider *the necessity* of our being watered; *the manner* in which the Lord promises to supply our need and *the certainty* that He will do so. O for a living meditation, not upon the letter of the word only, but upon its innermost teaching.

I. There is a great NECESSITY for the watering promised in the text. This we might conclude from the promise itself since there is not one superfluous word of promise in the whole Scriptures. It becomes more evident when we reflect that *all creature life is dependent upon the perpetual outgoing of divine power*. Existence is a continued creation, for the creatures have no power within themselves to preserve their own being—even the solid rocks and the great mountains would reek away as so many shadows if eternal omnipotence did not every moment keep them in being. The world is not like a wheel, which having received a great push from a strong hand, continues to revolve long after the hand is withdrawn, but divine energy goes forth continually to uphold all things which God has made. Now, the same law holds good in the more choice

and illustrious works of God in the kingdom of grace and multitudes of illustrations of this are to be found in Holy Writ. Believers are stones, but their upholding comes continually from the foundation—they are branches perpetually sucking nourishment from the stem—members of the body always deriving life from the head. Towards God, we are streams and not fountains; rays of light, not suns; lamps which must be trimmed and nourished with oil; sheep which need unceasing care and feeding. The inner life cannot live upon itself. It is one mark of its presence that the believer is not only dependent as a creature, but feels it as a living, sensible, instructed, and trustful creature. The Christian has no quarrel with the hint of utter weakness which is implied in the text, for he is well aware that he must be watered each moment or he will dry up from the root and cease to be.

Moreover, the truth is specially certain as touching the believer, for *a multitude of agencies are at work to dry up the moisture of His soul.* As far as this world is concerned, he is planted in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. His sorrows tend to parch him like a hot wind from the desert and earthly joys are still more like a sirocco which burns as an oven. Satan's temptations scorch and wither our hearts unless the water of life is abundantly laid at our root—and the men of the world act after the same manner. If we trusted in ourselves, we should soon be as the heath in the desert or as the grass upon the housetops. Indwelling sin is especially a devouring blast and would, if it acted without check and counterbalance, turn the garden of the soul into a desolate wilderness. We are as plants set in the blaze of a tropical sun upon which a burning oven pours forth its tremendous heat. One moment without divine watering and shade would dry us up root and branch.

Neither have we any other source of supply but the living God. "All my springs are in You." We have the ordinances and means of grace, but we cannot of ourselves fetch a blessing from them. The Spirit of God is as the dew and the rain, but we cannot command His influences—these lie altogether at the sovereign disposal of the Lord. To convince us of our utter impotence in the matter, the Lord asks us in the Book of Job, "Can you lift up your voice to the clouds that abundance of water may cover you?" No, the bottles of heaven drop at Jehovah's bidding and unless His good pleasure gives the land its refreshment, "the dust grows into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together," the brooks are dried up, and

the springs of water fail. None can afford us a drop of spiritual water unless the infinite depths of divine grace overflow to us and the Lord visits the heart and waters it from the river of God which is full of water. Therefore, the need that we cry with David, "I stretch forth my hands unto You: my soul thirsts after You, as a thirsty land."

Remember also that our need of divine watering is clearly seen when we consider *what drought, barrenness and death would come upon us if His hand were withdrawn*. Then would be fulfilled in us the prophecy of Jeremiah, "Their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. Because the ground is chapped, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads." Then would our leaf wither and our root fail. As for fruit—there would be none and we should be only fit for burning. Without watering every moment, the most faithful among us would be cast forth and be only fit for the fire—every prophet would become a Balaam, every apostle a Judas, every disciple a Demas. We must be watered and watered every moment or we die. Lord, save us or we perish. Look down from heaven and behold and visit this vine and the vineyard which Your right hand has planted.

II. This point is clear and our experience daily brings it under our notice. Let us now carefully regard THE MANNER in which the Lord promises to water His people—"I will water it every moment."

Our first thought is excited by *the perpetual act*—"every moment" the Lord will water the vineyard. There is never a moment in which it ceases to need it and therefore the supply is as constant as the demand. He further says, "Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day," so that at all hours of the night, as well as of the day, the Lord's care is over His people. Mercy knows no pause. Grace has no authorized hours or rather all hours are alike authorized—yes, and all moments, too. We may stay our asking, but God does not stay His giving. We may not perceive the flowings of His grace and yet they are never suspended, no, not for a moment, or else it were not true—"I will water it every moment." This leads us to rest assured of our final perseverance, since His perseverance in watering will produce our perseverance in budding, leafing, and fruit-bearing, else His watering were in vain, His grace ineffectual, His purpose defeated, and it would not be true that none had hurt the vineyard. Glory

be to the great Keeper of the vines. He will give a good account of His charge, saying, "Of all that You gave Me, I have lost none." Between here and heaven, there will never be a moment in which the Lord will not water His people and therefore never a moment in which they will be dried up and left to perish. Let faith lay hold of this and gather strength from it.

Nor is this all—the Lord's watering is *a renewed act.* He does not water us once in great abundance and then leave us to live upon what He has already poured out. He does not cause so much rain to fall in one day as may water the earth for seven years or there could not then be a daily dependence upon Him for rain and dew. Neither does He give grace enough to His servants at any one time to serve them for a month, or a week, or a day, or even an hour—He waters them "every moment" that they may know that at no one instant of time can they do without Him. He placed the whole fountain of living water in His Son, for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. But in our case He husbands His showers that we may seek and obtain new out-flowings of the eternal life and every moment come under new debts to His infinite love. It is very sweet to have it so, for thus we have each moment a reason for coming to Him, inasmuch as every moment He has something to impart to us. If we are conscious at this moment of our poverty, we need not despair, nor even hang our heads, for the next moment has its appointed watering and before the clock has ticked, faith may receive a flood of grace, according to the promise, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground."

Attention should be gratefully directed to the fact that the watering promised by the Lord *is a personal act*— "I will water it." Apollos waters, but he cannot do it of himself, nor can he do it every moment, nor at all except as an instrument in the hands of God. The Lord does His work effectually—as in creation He spoke not in vain, but He spoke and it was done. So in grace, He waters and we are watered indeed. Sweet is the truth that we are not left to second causes or agents—these might fail us in the hour of need, yes, they must prove liars if we depended on them—for it would be impossible for any of them or all of them put together to water us every moment. But the all-sufficient God, out of the measureless stores of grace, can and will in His own person supply all His saints forever, giving them to be filled with His fullness and never to know a

need. Not even to angels has He left the care of His saints, but He Himself through the mediation of His dear Son, does every moment keep and water us by His effectual grace.

How condescending is this on the Lord's part! He who leads forth the stars by their armies, bows the heavens to visit your soul and mine, taking care that there shall be a channel for the water of life to flow to the poorest and meanest of His people. How near this brings the Lord to us and what an idea it gives us of His perpetual active presence. As the gardener stands over the plant, gently pouring the water all around it and upon it so as to feed the roots and wash the leaves, even so does the Lord as it were stand over His people, watching over them for good, and dispensing His grace with all wisdom and prudence as they are able to receive it. Our need calls for His abiding presence and His love vouchsafes it. Every moment is the Lord near us, for every moment He waters us. Every moment does He love us because His love is actively demonstrating itself in condescending actions. His love suggests the watering and the watering proves His love. He is never weary of the work which He has Himself undertaken in love and which He will not delegate to others because He is so well pleased with doing it Himself.

III. This much suffices to fill our slender space—let us now, in the third place, consider THE CERTAINTY that the Lord will water every plant that His own right hand has planted. Here a vast number of arguments suggest themselves, but we will content ourselves with the one ground of confidence which is found in the Lord Himself and His previous deeds of love. The Lord our God is true and cannot lie and therefore if He says, "I will water it," we need no further guarantee that it will be done. "Has He said, and shall He not do it?" Has He ever broken the word which has once gone out of His mouth? Assuredly not. The Lord is mighty and cannot therefore leave His promise unfulfilled from lack of power to make it good. He may safely say, "I will," because nothing is impossible with Him. Man's "I will" is often an empty boast. Never is it so with the Lord of hosts. Our souls need supplies so great as to drain rivers of grace, but the all-sufficient God is able to meet the largest demands of the innumerable company of His people and He will meet them to His own honor and glory forever. Here, then, we see His truth, His power, and His all-sufficiency all pledged to provide for His chosen and we may be sure that the guarantee will stand.

The immutability and omnipresence of God both speak to the same effect. The Lord has watered His people up to now and as He cannot change, they may expect the same treatment at His hands. He will neither revoke His promise nor cease from fulfilling it. Moreover, He can be with His needy servants every moment as His promise implies, for it will never be said of Him, "Perhaps He is pursuing, or He is on a journey, or He sleeps and must be awakened." While He is working in heaven and on earth and in all deep places, yet can His gracious hand be busy among the tender plants of His grace and that at all times, yes every moment.

If we needed further confirmation, we might well remember that the Lord has already watered His vineyard in a far more costly manner than it will ever need again. The Lord Jesus has watered it with a sweat of blood and can it be supposed that He will leave it now? Gethsemane worked for the church much beyond any future need which can possibly arise to her—He who spared not His own blood will not withhold watering from those He has redeemed. Dear friend, you and I have already cost the Savior so much that there is no fear of His parting with us or losing His reward in us by giving us over to barrenness. Jesus has already fulfilled on our behalf a weightier engagement than that which is contained in the text. He said, "I will redeem it," and He has kept His word—and now, if He declares, "I will water it," it would be a superfluity of unbelief to distrust Him.

Hitherto the sacred promise has been fully kept, for we have been graciously preserved in spiritual life. Times of drought have befallen us and yet our soul has not been suffered to famish. Why, then, should we question the goodness of the Lord as to years to come? His delight is in us as much as ever, because Jesus, in whom He beholds us, is as fair and lovely as ever, and therefore we may expect the same kindness from the same loving heart. He has not only pledged Himself to water His people, but again and again He has spoken to the same effect. Hear how Isaiah speaks by the Holy Spirit—"And the Lord shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones: and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." Jeremiah also speaks to the same effect in his 31st chapter at the 12th verse. Shall the Lord run back from His covenant? Shall we so much blaspheme His name as to suppose that He will be false to His engagements? Unbelief, hide your guilty head. Doubting one, be comforted—He

who said, "I will water it every moment," must not be dishonored by your guilty suspicions, for He will do even as He has said. It is true your heart is, by nature, barren and dry, but what has that to do with the promise of free grace so as to render it of no effect? Is not your parched and desolate condition rather to be viewed as a reason why the Lord should open the windows of heaven above you and pour out His blessing?

One thing is never to be forgotten—we are the Lord's. Therefore, if He does not water us, He will Himself be the loser. An owner of vineyards, if he should allow them to be parched with the drought, would derive nothing from his estate. The vineyard would be dried up and he would receive no clusters. With reverence it is spoken—Our Lord Himself will never see the travail of His soul in untended vines, or in hearts unsanctified and unrenewed, or in men whose graces droop and die for lack of divine refreshing. The Lord must carry the work through or lose what He has done—and that would not be consistent with the foresight of His wisdom or the purpose of His heart. He chose us. He bought us. He delights in us. He put His very glory in pawn concerning us and we may therefore be sure beyond all doubt that he will water us to the end.

Does He water us every moment? Then let His praise continually be in our mouths. Does He thus care for us? Let us, then, watch for the advance of His cause, the extension of His kingdom, the good of His people. He who is thus watered should water others. If the Lord puts within us a well of living water through His divine watering, then let us give forth to others rivers of living water. Yet let not this be our first thought, but rather let us go away crying, "Lord, make my soul as a watered garden. Saturate my fleece. Fill my vessel to the brim and keep it full forever. Fulfill this word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope and water me every moment, even me."

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

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THE SON GLORIFIED BY THE FATHER AND THE FATHER GLORIFIED BY THE SON

NO. 1465A

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

"These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You." John 17:1.

THIS was a prayer after a sermon. These words Jesus spoke and then He lifted up His eyes to heaven in supplication. No discourse should be unattended by prayer, for how can we expect a blessing on what we have heard or spoken unless we ask it of the Lord? The sower should water with many a supplication the seed that he has sown and the hearer should diligently seek the favor of Him who gives bread to the eater as well as seed to the sower.

It was a prayer in connection with the Lord's Supper. Surely above all things, prayer should mix with every part of our attendance at the sacred table. Dare we come to the sacred feast without prayer? Can we sit there without prayer? Can we retire without prayer? If so, let us not wonder if the ordinance should be a mere form and unrefreshing to our souls. With sermon and with sacrament, let us mingle the salt of supplication without prescribing how much.

Observe *the attitude of the prayer.* The Savior, it appears, prayed with uplifted eyes. There is much in this outward manifestation of His devotion. We have not time to enter into it fully, but this may suffice—the uplifted eyes showed to whom He was speaking and it bore testimony that that He was not idly drawing the bow at a venture, but directing His prayer unto God and looking up as the arrow ascended to His Father's throne. It showed, also, that He was looking away from and above His disciples and their sympathy, above all the world and its enmity, and even above Himself. His outlook was towards the Invisible—this is for our instruction. He could have prayed with eyes closed if it had so pleased Him, but His were the opened eyes of faith and love which could look into the face of God and could yet look upon all things round without distraction and therefore it was not necessary for Him to draw down the curtains of His eyelids, but He gazed into the opened heaven.

Notice *the commencement of His prayer*, for it furnishes our text. He began by saying, "Father." He did not say, "Our Father." *"Our* Father" is for us, for we, in the filial relationship which we sustain, are many. But "Father," is for Him, for He is one and He is such a Son as, in some respects, we can never be. Into the mysterious doctrine of the eternal filiation it is not ours to enter, but we know it to be a truth. "Father," is a word appropriate to our Lord's lips alone, in its highest conceivable sense and how grandly it comes from Him. It shows His love to God, His confidence in God, His complete resignation to the divine will, and His sweet acquiescence in it. He is about to be broken in pieces with the iron rod of His Father's vengeance, but He calls Him, "Father." He is about to drink that cup of wormwood and gall which would have been hell to us if He had not drained it dry, but He says, "Father." And herein He sets us an example—in all times of tribulation let us fall back upon our sonship, our adoption, and the fatherhood of our great God. To our Father let us go, for to whom else should a child so naturally fly? Where else can we go but to our Father who knows what we have need of before we ask Him and who will never desert His own, but like a father pities his children, will pity them that fear Him?

The prayer itself—the very fact of the prayer—shows us His manhood. Jesus pleads—He must be man. He lifts His eyes to heaven and He cries, "Father"—He must be like ourselves, a man. But the prayer, in some respects, speaks of the deity which it scarcely veils. As in some statues which you must often have looked upon with admiration, you seem to see the face of the figure through the marble veil, so it is here in the prayer of Christ that the God shines through the man. It is such a prayer as only He might offer who is God as well as man. Dare you say, "Father, glorify me, that I may glorify You"? That would be a presumptuous expression for creature lips to utter. Only He who counted it not robbery to be equal with God, though He made Himself of no reputation, might thus pray. Though He cries to God, "Father, glorify Your Son," yet may He add and put no explanatory sentence with it, "that Your Son also may glorify You." He is able to return all the glory God may give and has the power as much to magnify the Father's name as the Father may magnify His name. Here I see the humanity, but I admire and adore the deity of our blessed Lord.

The first sentence of His prayer reveals His foresight—"Father, the hour is come"—the hour ordained in the eternal purpose; the hour prophesied of which Daniel sought to know; the hour towards which all hours had pointed; the central hour—the hour up to which men dated, and from which they shall date again if they read time right. It is the

hinge, pivot, and turning point of all human history; the dark, yet delivering hour; the hour of vengeance and of acceptance. "The hour is come." He knew it. His inward infallible foresight made Him know that now was the time for Him to offer up Himself a sacrifice for sin.

His expression is, however, very choice. *"The hour* is come." His faith thinks it but an hour—the midnight of Gethsemane, the morning of the scourging, the day of the crucifixion—all are but an hour, a short space. Now is He in trouble, for His time of travail is come. But He counts it as an hour for joy of that which shall be born into the world by His grievous pangs. Thus His love and patience make Him despise the time of shame and reckon it but a brief interval.

The foresight of which we have spoken makes Him look beyond the hour. You and I look into the hour of darkness, as a frequent rule, and see no further, for our eyes are dim through unbelief. But He goes on beyond the hour and His prayer is, "Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You." He fixes His eyes upon the glory that was yet to be revealed and for joy of that He counts even His death to be but an hour—looking upon it as soon to be overpast and lost in the glory of His Father. In all this, brethren, let us imitate our Lord and let us keep our eyes not on the present, but on the future; not on this light affliction, which is but for a moment, but on the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which will come of it. And let us with holy confidence, whenever our hour of darkness arrives, resort to our God in secret. The best preparation for the worst hour is prayer. The best remedy for a depressed spirit is nearness to God. In this, then, let us follow our Master and may the Holy Spirit help us to do so.

Let us now consider the essential words of the prayer. They are twofold and in them we find first *a petition for Himself*—"Father, glorify Your Son." And, secondly, *the motive of that petition*—"that Your Son also may glorify You."

I. Begin, then, with THE PETITION FOR HIMSELF and I invite you to observe it as an *answered* petition. More than 1,800 years have rolled away since those divine words fell from our blessed Master's lips and they have been answered and are still being answered. We shall not look upon them from the standpoint of the apostles, but from our own, and regard the prayer as one which is granted.

And first, *it was answered in and during His sufferings.* Some of the early fathers confined the sense of these words to the passion of our Lord and I like their strong expressions when they say that His cross was His throne and Gethsemane was as glorious as Olivet, if not more so—for the glory of the cross would be a wonderful theme if man had mind and

words enough to expound upon it. Do we speak of disgrace? Doubtless He died a felon's death. Do we speak of shame? No doubt they spat upon Him and derided Him. Do we speak of weakness? No doubt He slept in a grave. But in His disgrace, shame, and weakness, Jesus is most honorable, adorable, and strong. Faith sees a moral and spiritual splendor about her crucified Lord which outshines all the previous glories of His eternal throne.

I shall not so confine the sense of the words, but yet that sense must be included. The Son of God was glorified while He was dying and *it was one part of His glory that He should be able to bear the enormous load of human guilt.* As a race we lay crushed beneath it. A thousand Samsons could not relieve us. Angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim could never lift the stupendous mass. But this one man alone with no help—in weakness of body and in death pangs—bore away the enormous load of human guilt. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him—the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all. What a load it was! And that He could bear it was indeed a display of His glory. The lost in hell cannot bear the wrath of God. An eternity of suffering will not have discharged the dreadful penalty and yet He bore that burden in an hour. Oh, marvelous strength of the incarnate God! Glorious are You indeed, O Christ, upon Your cross. More glorious, even, than in that moment when, with a word, you shall shake not only earth, but also heaven, for now the weight of angry heaven rests on You and You stand fast beneath it. Glorify Him, beloved, you for whom He bore that weight. Glorify Him that He was able to endure it.

He was glorified also in the manner in which He bore it, in that He sustained it without shrinking or starting back. There was no guilt or guile in Him, though questioned again and again before Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate. There were no angry speeches when He was brow-beaten, buffeted, blindfolded, and spit upon. He displayed nothing but gentleness, even when His enemies had pierced His hands and His feet—nothing but triumphant pity and almighty love even when they mocked His agonies. They could not anger Him with all their reviling and when they cried, "Let Him come down from the cross and we will believe on Him," yet He did not loosen a hand from the cruel tree to smite the scorners nor shake His feet free from the nail to spurn the blasphemers.

When you think of His physical agonies, of His mental torture, of His spiritual darkness—when you consider that all the powers of earth and hell were let loose upon Him. And when, worst of all, you remember that the Father's face was hidden from Him till He cried, "Why have You forsaken Me?" and yet consider that our Champion, having begun the re-

deeming work, went through with it and never drew back His hands from the covenant which He had made, nor flinched under the strokes He bore—I say He was glorious in His passion and His prayer was heard. The Father did glorify His Son even on the tree. It was an hour of glory that might dazzle angels' eyes—that hour when He said, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost. What had He finished? He had finished that which saved His people. He had peopled heaven with immortal spirits who shall delight in Him forever and had shaken the gates of hell. God indeed glorified His Son in enabling Him to bear and bear so well, all the weight of sin and the penalty that was due to it.

And now today, beloved, we see that *God glorified His Son in His death because in dying He saved His people*. I do not believe for a single moment that the result of Christ's death ever was, or ever could be uncertain. That which He intended by it, will be done and has been so far done to the last jot and tittle up to this moment. His great object was the redemption of His chosen—"Christ loved His church and gave Himself for it." It is said of a certain company that they sing, "He has redeemed us from among men." Now, when He died, He did not render the redemption of His people possible, but He ransomed them completely. By His agonies and death He did not merely give a bare hope of the pardon of sin, but He hurled the sin of all His elect into the depths of the sea in that same moment. He did not merely make the salvation of men a possibility if they would, but He saved His people then and there. He finished the work which He came to do in proof whereof it is written that, "This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God." And He would not have sat there if His work had not been done. According to the words of the prophet, He had finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness, for He had offered an effectual atonement which none can deny. And so the Father glorified His Son, even when He died, since He accepted His redeeming blood on the behalf of His people.

The Father glorified His Son by making Him, even in the hour of His passion, to be victorious over all His enemies. Those nailed feet bruised the serpent's head so that he could never resume his former power. Those nailed hands grasped the serpent of sin and strangled it. And that dying head, as it bowed itself, smote death with its own sword, as David smote Goliath, for He, "death by dying slew."

The powers of evil were tremendous. Think of sin, of Satan, and of death—but all their hosts were defeated in that one pitched battle of which the cross was the banner and the dying Redeemer the Champion. O glorious Lord, You have led captivity captive, making a show of Your

adversaries openly even on Your cross and nailing to the accursed tree the handwriting of ordinances that was against us. Yes, the Father glorified You even there while yet You were in the agonies of death.

Beside this, *there were some outward signs of the glory of Christ even in His death* which we can scarcely stop to mention. Did not the temple rend her veil? Did not the Sun conceal his face? Did not the rocks split and the dead arise? Was not all Jerusalem filled with tremor and did not the centurion cry, "Truly, this was the Son of God"? Yes, the Father glorified His Son even when it pleased Him to bruise Him and to put Him to grief. With one hand He smote and with the other hand He glorified. There was a power to crush, but there was also a power to sustain working at the same time. The Father glorified His Son.

And now, beloved, what shall I say concerning *the Father glorifying the Son after His death and as the result of it?* I will not attempt to expound it, but I will simply say that the rending of the veil at the moment of His death was the glorifying of Christ—for now there is a way to the throne of God made manifest for us, which before had been closed. Then the opening of His pierced side was another glorifying of Him, for this day the double fountain is to believers the effectual cleansing of both the guilt and the power of sin. And thus the Savior's pierced heart glorified Him in its power to bless. Then that poor body lay in the gave—I call it poor, for so it seemed—wrapped in linen and the spices. But, beloved, the Father glorified even that dead body which men thought to be corruptible, for it saw no corruption. During the three days and nights no worm could come near it, nor trace of decay. That crystal vase in which the rich ointment of the Savior's soul had dwelt must not be injured. "Not a bone of Him shall be broken." Beautified by those scars as when a skillful artist renders an image more lovely than before by marks of the engraver's tool, that body must be safely guarded by watching angels till the morning came. It barely dawned. As yet the sun was rising and lo, the Sun of righteousness Himself arose! As a man arising from his couch puts on his garments, so did our Lord put on the vesture of the body which He had laid aside and came again into the world alive as to His body and His soul—a perfect man. Oh, it was a grand glorifying of Christ when the Father raised Him from the dead and He was seen by His disciples once again. Death had no bands to hold Him. The sepulcher's ward could not confine the unequalled prisoner. Declared to be glorious by His resurrection from the dead, His prayer was heard.

And before long, when a few weeks had passed over Him, there came another glory—for from the brow of Olivet He gently ascended, floating in

the air from the company of His disciples, rising up in the midst of angels till a cloud received Him out of human sight—

"They brought His chariot from on high
To bear Him to His throne.
They clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
'The glorious work is done.'"

His Father glorified Him and now He sits at the right hand of God. Words, you are dumb things, you cannot tell of His present glory.

Early the other morning there came to my bedside a brother to awaken me whose face seemed to beam with joy as he said, "In my sleep last night I thought I saw the Lord upon His throne. And oh, the glory which the Father put upon Him! I wish I could fall asleep again that I might continue to dream on." The tears were in his eyes, as he said, "Oh, the glory of Christ! Oh, the glory of Christ!" I reminded him of how Mercy laughed in her sleep, and Christiana asked her why and when she told her dream, the matron said she might well laugh if she so dreamed. Happy are those who, sleeping or waking—living or dying—may but get a glimpse of His glory. Nothing ever ravishes my heart like the thought of my Lord's being glorified. Oh, if I could, by some means, help to honor Him! If only I may but be the earthen vessel in which His treasure should be stored or the trumpet by which His name might be proclaimed! This is joy enough for me. And you all feel the same, you who love Him. You delight to think how high His throne is and how bright is His countenance, and how resplendent are His courts. Have patience. You shall see Him soon, for the Father will glorify Him in the Second Advent. He tarries; He tarries long, as we think, yet He says, "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me." He is coming to be glorified, even among the sons of men. So shall the prayer of the text be fulfilled in the golden ages yet to dawn—and then throughout eternity.

II. We pause a moment and then we shall briefly think of THE MOTIVE OF HIS PRAYER. "Father, glorify Your Son, *that your Son also may glorify You.*" Do notice this. When you pray, it is a grand thing to pray with a clean heart, but selfishness is uncleanness. In our blessed Lord there was no selfishness. He said, "I seek not My own glory" and even in this prayer that word of His is true, for He only seeks glory that He may glorify the Father. Beloved, the desire of our Lord is granted, for God is glorified in Jesus Christ more than in any other way. The glory of God in nature is inconceivable! This round world and all that dwell therein; the open sea calmly mirroring the sky, or ruffled with tempests; the wondrous expanse of heaven, fleecy with clouds, or blue beneath a torrid sun, or lit up with innumerable stars. Yon hills with all their forests; yon laughing valleys with their lowing herds and bleating flocks—"These are

Your glorious works, Parent of good, Almighty," You get glory from every flickering blade of grass or frond of fern and every flitting insect and creeping worm mean Your praise. There is nothing but what glorifies You, from leviathan to a minnow. Yet all nature put together fails to reveal all Your glorious attributes. The divine faithfulness, justice, and truth are scarcely manifest in nature, though traces of them may be seen—but in the face of Jesus, who is the express image of the Father, God is glorified to the fullest. In the death of Christ, above all things, God is glorified, for there all the attributes of God are seen. There was the power which sustained Christ beneath His more than Herculean task. There is the love which surrendered the darling of its bosom that He might die instead of traitors. There is the justice which would not, could not forgive sin without satisfaction. There is the truth which had threatened to punish and did punish—which had promised to give a Savior and did give Him. There is the faithfulness to the covenant, which kept that covenant at such a dread expense. There is the wisdom which planned the marvelous way of salvation by a substitute—no, let me put it all together—the wholeness, the holiness of God. Yes, all His attributes are seen, each one equally magnified in the death of Jesus Christ. He is glorious and the triune God is glorified in Him.

And now, beloved, God is glorified in the death of Christ by the love of all those whom Jesus saves; by the sacred awe and filial fear of all whom Jesus brings to the Father's feet; by the ardent, patient devotion of all who are consecrated in heart and feel the sacred flame of love to Christ setting their souls on fire. Up there in heaven, where the white-robed never cease to sing—and here below, where martyrs were burned for their love of God; where confessors defied all adversaries to spread abroad the glory of His name; where humble Christians suffer in patience or labor on with diligence, or walk in holiness—the Father's name is glorified through the passion of the Christ of God.

We had many things to say, but time fails us and therefore we close with these three observations which we want to leave upon your minds.

The first is this. *Christ's motive should be ours*. When you ask a blessing from God, ask it that you may glorify God by it. Do you pine to have your health back again? Be sure that you want to spend it for Him. Do you desire temporal advancement? Desire it that you may promote His glory. Do you even long for growth in grace? Ask it only that you may glorify Him. If there is anything that you dare wish and pray for, put it so—"Father, bless Your child that Your child may, in return, bless You and serve You." Those are clean prayers which have such a motive—all others have the taint of self about them. God help you to do everything for His

glory—to speak for His glory, to live for His glory, to die for His glory—and then you shall rise again and live forever for His glory. Happy, happy is the man whose lot this shall be. Let this be the desire which masters you, even that which moved your Lord.

Next, *Christ's theology should be ours*. What is that? Why, first that He is to be glorified and secondly, that the Father is to be glorified. Error sometimes blows one way and sometimes another. In years gone by, the difficulty was to bring men to glorify the Lord Jesus—they would worship God—but not the Christ of God. And so there came the great Arian fight and afterwards Socinian controversies, for they would not glorify Christ. Oh, you who have been saved by Him, I am not afraid of you on that point, but nowadays there appears to be, in some minds, a forgetfulness of the Father. Christ is loved for He died, but many seem to look upon the Father as having no share in the wondrous work of redemption. But, beloved, they are one in our salvation. Father, Son, and Spirit agree in one in our redemption and it would be fatal indeed for us to set one person of the divine Trinity above the other two. Let all men honor the Son even as they honor the Father—and honor the Father even as they honor the Son. It would be traitorous to Christ's inmost wish if we were to glorify the Son and fail to reverence and love the Father!

Lastly, *let every believer here see His security.* Is it not a most wonderful guarantee of the safety of everyone for whom Christ died, that the glory of Christ and the glory of the Father—and I may add the glory of the blessed Spirit—are all equally concerned in the salvation of the believing soul? Dare I say it? It would be a blot upon the everlasting glory if one believing soul were ever lost. Then were God's truth no longer sure, His faithfulness no longer firm, His love no more immutable. His power might be doubted—His changeableness would be proven. But, beloved, it cannot be. Christ will not lose a sheep of His flock, nor will the Comforter lose a spirit in which He has once began to indwell. You can rest in this. Abide without doubt or fear in Christ, for the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but the covenant of His love shall not be removed from you, says the Lord that has mercy on you.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, dear hearers, and these divine privileges shall be yours. And as I prayed just now, so I pray yet again, that these things may belong to every soul in this house without exception, through faith in Christ Jesus, by the work of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 17.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—416, 412, 233.

The Colportage Society conducted by Mr. Spurgeon supports 82 men in needy districts and does a great work in selling Bibles and healthy literature. Owing to the depression of trade and the falling off of subscriptions, this branch of holy service is, at this moment, in a difficult position and will soon be in urgent need unless the Lord should move some of His stewards to help. It seems necessary to give this announcement so that friends may know that there is a channel for their gifts and a reason for bringing them forth. Mr. Spurgeon feels confident that by some means or other the present necessity for the Lord's work will be graciously supplied and furnish fresh occasion for gratitude and increased faith.

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THE ROYAL PREROGATIVE
NO. 1465B

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

"See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me: I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal."
Deuteronomy 32:39.

THERE is but one God—Jehovah is His name—the "I AM." That one God will not endure a rival. Why should He? He made all things and sustains all things. Should a creature that His own hands have made be set up in rivalry with Him? If it is a great man like Nebuchadnezzar, if he says, "Behold this great Babylon which I have built," God will send him to eat grass among the bulls and make him to know that no man is great in the sight of God. What a provocation it must be to God to see men bowing down before idols fashioned by their own hands! What a degradation to man that he should worship gold, or silver, or wood, or stone—and what a grievous dishonor to the great God of all! And it seems to me to be the worst of all dishonors when God sees the image of His own dear Son made into an idol and men prostrate themselves to worship the representation of the cross on which redemption was lifted on high. This must touch His sacred soul and vex Him to the uttermost, for God is God alone and beside Him there is no other. He will not give His glory to another, neither His praise to graven images. In the text before us the great *ego* is seen. The Lord says, "I, even I." That *ego* is so great that it fills all places and therefore there can be no room for another. "I, even I, am God, and there is no god with Me." "Besides Me," He says in another place, "there is none else." Oh, to have such lofty thoughts of God that we can have no consideration for anything that would rob Him of the glory which is so exclusively His own. Gladly would we burn with a holy jealousy which abhors the idea of a rival god and casts the name of Baal out of its mouth with utter loathing.

In the text, the Lord claims the sovereign prerogative of life and death. He says, "I kill and I make alive." It is He from whom we first of all receive our being. His hand kindles the torch of life and from Him comes the quenching of the flame. No angel's arm could save us from the grave, nor could a myriad of angels confine us there when once again He shall bid us rise. God kills and God makes alive. Royal personages have usually been very jealous of the prerogative of life and death, but our great

God has it without bound or limit. He reigns supreme. "I kill," He says, "and I make alive."

From the connection in which the text stands, it is clear that the Lord alludes to the making of nations or to the destroying of nations. It was God that made Israel to be a people. It was God that cast out the Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites from being nations before Him. It was God that raised up Chaldea and Babylon and then strengthened Persia to break Babylon in pieces and Greece to destroy Persia—and Rome with iron feet to break down Greece—and when the time had come, it was He who spoke to the city of the seven hills and she too lost her royal power. Kingdoms and thrones belong to the Lord and the shields of the mighty are lifted on high or laid in the dust as He wills. Though they regard it not, there is a King of kings and Lord of lords—and when the long page of history shall be unrolled and men shall be able to see the end from the beginning with enlightened eyes—they shall know that all through the ages the disregarded and neglected God, the unseen and even unthought of God, was still reigning evermore. Across the pages of earth's long record shall be written in right royal hand, "I kill and I make alive." In providence God is absolute; the blessed and only Potentate whose sovereign will knows no dispute.

At this time, however, I purpose to carry this great truth away from the realm of providence into the kingdom of grace. We shall confine ourselves to that second sentence—"I wound and I heal." On this word we shall make three observations, the first being that *none but the Lord can wound or heal.* Secondly, that *the Lord can wound and heal.* And thirdly, that *the Lord does wound and heal*—three thoughts which are closely connected and yet are marked by instructive shades of difference.

I. First, NONE BUT THE LORD CAN WOUND OR HEAL. To begin at the beginning—*the Lord alone can spiritually wound.* When we have to deal with human hearts, our first effort has to be to wound them. Naturally, man thinks himself whole-hearted and in sound health, but he is not so. The great object of the gospel ministry at first is to convince men of sin, to humble them before God—in fact, to wound them, to cut them to the heart. But no man can wound without the Lord. I speak without any measure to my utterance—no preacher can truly wound the human heart. He may speak very honestly and plainly. He may speak with deep pathos and true affection. He may wield at times the thunders of God and at other times the soft and gentle bands of love may be in his hands, but in no way can the preacher get at the heart of men unless his Master is with him. Charm you ever so wisely, O wise man, the adder is deaf and it is in vain that you use your enchantments. As well convince the wild winds or convert the wayward waves, as hope to touch the human heart till God makes bare His arm. It is the Holy Spirit's work to convince of sin

and until He puts forth His power, the preacher may preach himself dumb with weariness and blind with weeping, but no result can possibly follow. And what is true of preachers is true of all the teachers in the Sunday school, of all the earnest folk that go about to speak personally to men, ay, and of the most tender mother and the most earnest father. There is no wounding the child's heart—there is no breaking it down into contrition by the tenderest arguments or the wisest counsels. You will come back and say as we have done many times, "Who has believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

Yes, dear friends, and the most solemn *truths* which in themselves have a natural tendency to wound the heart, nevertheless cannot do it apart from the work of God Himself. There is the Sword and in itself it is sharp and cutting, but no man can handle it. The eternal arm must be revealed or the hide of behemoth will not feel the weapon. A sword will cut through a coat of mail if a Coeur-de-Lion has the wielding of it—but not in a child's hand will it wound to killing. God must take the Scripture in His hands and use it to the dividing of joints and marrow or sinners will escape its power. Terrible truths there are in the Bible which ought to make men shake, but they hear them and deny them—they even laugh at them and continue in sin. Sweet truths there are which ought to make a rock shed tears, but you may tell of Gethsemane's bloody sweat and the five dear wounds of Him who was found guilty of excessive love and yet men will hear it and go their way each man to his farm and to his merchandise and forget it all. I grant you the truths are powerful, but not until the mighty God applies them to the heart and conscience.

And in addition to the truth of God, *providence* itself may come and work upon the heart of men, but cause no wounding of the right sort. I have seen the ungodly brought to destitution and poverty by their extravagances and brought to sickness and death's door by their lusts—and yet they have not been wounded. They have seen the result of sin; they have even felt it in the marrow of their bones, and yet the dogs have gone back to their vomit. They have still clung to their idols and held to their abominations. The burnt child dreads the fire, but the burnt sinner thrusts his hand into the flames again. We have seen men so sick that they have trembled at the thought of death and it has been supposed from what they said, that they were really impressed—and if they were restored to health would lead another life—but, alas, we have seen them restored to health and sinning worse than before. The wicked breaks his bands asunder. They cast their cords from them. All the terrors of providence—bereavements, losses, sicknesses—all have failed with the unregenerate. Their stone heart has turned the edge of the plow which sought to break it up. Men have wearied all the agencies of grace and providence, but yet they have not been wounded. Their heart is stout as that

of leviathan, "Yes, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone." None can effectually wound the heart but God alone.

Now, the same thing is true about the healing—*none but the Lord can heal*. Of course there is no need with regard to those who were never wounded. Nobody can heal such persons. I have known some preachers try to do that, though it has always seemed to me to be poor work to try to heal men who have never been wounded, to preach mercy to persons who think that they have no sin, to preach grace to men who dream that they have merits of their own. Christ did not do so. He said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The whole have no need of a physician, but those that are sick." There is no healing then for those who are not wounded—and equally there is no healing those who are wounded unless God lays His hand to their sore. Have you ever met with spiritually wounded persons? If you have, if you are a believer, your whole heart has gone out towards them and drawing examples from your own experience and promises from the Word of God and sweet encouragements from gospel doctrine, you have labored to pour a healing balm into their bleeding wounds. But have you not often failed? No, apart from the Spirit of the living God, have you not always failed and must you not fail? Ah, dear friends, it is one thing to talk of a wounded spirit, but it is quite another thing to feel a wounded spirit. And you may talk about healing, too, but it is quite another thing to receive the healing and quite another thing to apply it. Let God cut a man with His great sword, as once He smote me, and I guarantee you that no ordinances will heal him. "No," says a friend, "come and hear a sermon." He hears it, but the preaching makes him worse and he feels sadder than ever. I have known persons foolish enough to persuade such seekers to come to the communion table. They have only eaten and drunk condemnation to themselves. While they have been at the table they have known themselves to be intruders and their hearts have bled more than ever. You can easily pacify a man whose sense of sin is a mere pretense, just as you may soon heal the imitation wound—but it is not so with one who has the arrows of the Lord rankling within him—he needs divine surgery. As for the hypocritical penitent, give him outward sacraments and he believes that he is all right. But if God has wounded him, all the sacraments under heaven will never minister consolation to him. He must go to God for that, for only in Christ Jesus can it be found. All the preachers, ay, and all the doctrines of the Bible, sound and true as the preachers may be, and inspired as the doctrines certainly are, will fail to comfort a bleeding soul until the eternal Lord shall bow Himself from His throne in heaven and bind up the broken in heart. I know it is so. Gospel truth is sufficient in itself to comfort all that mourn, but it will comfort nobody so long as the natural unbelief of the heart remains. Get a hold of a lacer-

ated spirit, torn with unbelief, and try what you can do. Say, "Trust in the Lord, my friend," and he replies, "I cannot trust." Tell him Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and he says he knows that, but he cannot get hold of it. Go on to tell him how the Lord receives the very chief of sinners. Do your duty with him, for whether you can heal him or not, you are bound to set the gospel before him—but you shall find that you have worked in vain if you have gone in your own strength and forgotten the prayerful spirit and the humble reliance which are so necessary to success. God can use you to heal a broken heart, but you cannot do it yourself.

Unconverted hearer, look not to us as though we could do anything for you, but look only to Jesus. Ah, friend, if I could wound you and if I could heal you, it would do you no good. If I could convert every sinner here, of what use would the human conversion be? Have you never heard of Mr. Rowland Hill being met one evening by a drunken man who staggered up to him and said, "Hallo, Mr. Hill, I am one of your converts." "Ah," said Mr. Rowland Hill, "very likely, but you are none of God's converts or else you would not be drunk." Now, our converts, if they are *our* converts, will be very poor productions. If one man can convert you, another man can unconvert you. That which is worked by the flesh can be undone by the flesh. "You must be born-again. Except a man is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Unless there is a work of grace in the soul which the will of man, the will of the flesh, blood, birth, education, teaching can never work—unless, I say, there is a supernatural power exercised upon us, we shall never see the face of God at the last with acceptance.

So there is the first truth of God—God alone can wound and God alone can heal.

II. And now, secondly, THE LORD CAN WOUND AND HE CAN HEAL. What a mercy this is and how comfortably it encourages the Christian to go about his work! *The Lord can wound.* He can pierce the most unlikely heart. Look at Saul of Tarsus. You would never have thought, when he was hurrying to Damascus to drag the saints to prison, that he would ever be humbled and made to cry out, "What will You have me do?" The Lord knew His man and just when he was on the brow of the hill and could see Damascus in the plain, and was ready to devour the saints, the Lord let fly an arrow. Down went one Saul of Tarsus, so wounded that it took three days to extract the arrow. This was wonderful, for Saul was like leviathan, of whom we read, "The sword of him that lays at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon"—yet the arrow of the Lord laid him low. The Lord can wound men in very unlikely places. I have known the arrow of conviction come home to a man who had not entered a place of worship for years. Such is the infinite sovereignty of

God that He calls them a people that were not a people and even those who sought Him not He seeks out. Ay, even in the haunts of sin, a man is not safe from the arrows of God—I mean the arrows of God's infinite love. God can still touch the conscience. Leviathan, you know, is wrapped about with scales, "shut up together as with a close seal," yet there is a weak point even in leviathan. The cunning hunter knows how to find it out and though there are some men so skeptical, so atheistic, so obstinate, so profane, so abominable that nobody dares to come near them, yet have we known it—attribute it to the praise of sovereign grace—the Lord has smitten even these with His great and strong sword and afterwards He has healed them by His mighty grace. Never despair of anybody. If salvation were man's work you might despair, but since it is God's work, despair of none. The wretch who is the nearest approach to an incarnate devil may yet become as an angel of God. Such is the grace of God that though men make a league with death and a covenant with hell, He can break their leagues and disannul their covenants, take the prey from between the jaws of the dragon and get to Himself renown.

The Lord can wound, then. He can wound some that have been sitting under the gospel for years and have defied its power. My arrows have rattled against your harness and I have said, "It is all in vain," but I pray my Master, one of these days when I am drawing a bow at a venture, may be pleased to direct it between that joint of the harness which I feared did not exist—that little joint where the shoulder piece does not fit close to the breastplate. I have feared that you were encased as in the scales of leviathan, of which we read, "One is so near to another that no air can come between them: they are joined one to another." Yet the Lord can send in His arrow and make the proud heart feel the power of His glorious truth; the most thoughtless, the most careless, the most abandoned are still within range of the Lord's bow.

What a very sweet side of the truth is the second part of it—namely, that *He can heal*. There are some awful cases of bleeding wounds! I wonder whether I have in this audience any souls desperately wounded? I have known the heart bleed as though it would bleed to death beneath the sword of conviction. Some are driven to despair and have been ready to lay violent hands upon themselves in the bitterness of their souls. Let it ring out like a trumpet that these poor despairing ones may hear it—*the Lord can heal*. There is no case so desperate but what Jehovah-Jesus can recover it. Despair, you must let your captives go! Despondency, you must open your prison when Jesus comes! Has He not come forth from the Father on purpose that He may loose the captives and say to the shackled ones, "Go free."

The wounds which God gives are apt to fester. You remember how the psalmist said, "My wounds stink and are corrupt"? When there is bad

blood, we have known men's wounds to become horrible and some souls who have had their conscience awakened have become a terror to themselves. "I cannot be saved," they say. "I cannot pray. How should such a wretch as I am ever pray? I cannot hope for mercy. It would be astonishment to heaven and hell, too, if ever I found mercy." Listen to me and let your heart believe it—you may certainly recover. God, who does all things and to whom nothing is impossible, can heal your wounds though they reek with corruption. If you lie at hell's gate; if you seem to be half in Topher already, His arm is strong enough to help you. If you will look to Christ lifted up on the cross, there is pardon, life, acceptance, joy, and heaven for you, even for you. He that wounded you will heal you. He that has broken you will bind you up. He that has killed you will make you alive. Let your ears take in the gladsome message which I am bid to deliver you—"I wound and I heal."

Yet let me charge you not to look for a cure anywhere but to God in Christ Jesus. Shun the thought of being healed except the Lord shall heal you. I dread lest a wounded soul should go to a minister or to a priest, or to the most religious person in the world and think to get healing of man. Your wounds are meant to drive you to your God. Seek Him and no one else. To your knees now in your private chamber or if you have not one, get alone even in the street, for you can be alone in a crowd—but go *to God* with your bleeding heart. Tell Him, "I am a sinner. Lord, I am all but a damned sinner. I have been such an offender that I scarcely dare to hope, but I hear that You can heal me and give me comfort. Oh, for Jesu's sake be merciful to me. I thank you that you have wounded me—it were better for me to be wounded than to be as indifferent and careless as I used to be. But now, Lord, do not altogether break me to pieces and treat me as an enemy. My spirit fails unless You comfort me. Oh, look upon me!" If you cannot say as much as that, yet let your tears drop and look up, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Do but cry to Him and you shall find healing, for God can heal you and none else. Away with those who dream that outward religiousness can do you good. Away, away with the deceivers who would tell you that *they* can give you pardon. No man living can absolve his fellow sinners—the pretense is the superlative of blasphemy. God is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation and we are glad to proclaim that word and point you to the Lord Jesus who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins.

III. Now I come to my third and last point and that is—THE LORD DOES WOUND AND DOES HEAL. I have two things here tonight. I will only show them to you and have done. First, *I have a bundle of arrows* which I have seen shot at different times from the bow of God so as to

wound men. I cannot shoot them at you just now, but I will show them to you.

I have known Him shoot this arrow at a man—the arrow of continual gentleness. He has been very good to the sinner and continued His kindness to him for years. Augustine tells of one to whom God was so wonderfully kind and the man was so wonderfully bad, that at last he grew astonished at God's goodness. And since the Lord continued to load him with benefits, he turned round and cried, "Most benignant God, I am ashamed of being Your enemy any longer. I confess my sin and repent of it." How I wish that that arrow would pierce your hearts! It is one which readily penetrates a noble mind. The more gross and animal natures do not feel it, but where God has left some little spark of nobility, a man more readily feels, "I cannot go on and sin against a God so good." It is a very sharp arrow, but it is dipped in love and it wounds most sweetly.

Here is another—God is angry with the wicked every day. Oh, if that truth would go home to some of you, "God is angry with me, for I have broken His holy law." Surely it would cut you to the quick. I do not like anybody to be angry with me, but oh, to have the Lord angry with me! How could I endure it? Dear hearer, I hope you will feel the smart of this warning. It is very easy for you to hear it and for me to speak it, but if you once feel it, it will tear your heart and fill your loins with agony.

Another arrow—"He that believes not is condemned already." You are not to be condemned at the last merely, you are condemned now. You are not in a state of probation—you have already been proven and you have failed—and you are walking this earth at this moment as a condemned criminal. Ah, if that barbed iron were to enter your soul, it would wound you indeed. Here is another arrow—"The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God." "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Many have been playing with that arrow lately—it is a very sharp tool and he had best beware who toys with it. Let the Lord send it home and it will kill a man's proud hopes and vain presumptions as quickly as any arrow in the quiver of the Almighty.

Here is another—"You have destroyed yourself." Your present state of ruin and danger is your own fault. You have brought it upon yourself and you have nobody to blame but yourself that you are a lost man. Ah, that will rankle and pain the soul as though a sword were in the bones.

And here is another—"You are dead in sin. You have destroyed yourself, but you cannot save yourself." I have seen a man get that into his flesh a little way and he has been livid with anger. He has bit his lips and said, "I will never hear that preacher again. Why, he made out my case to be hopeless." The man is sure to come again. He is like a great fish in a stream with a hook in his jaws. He will draw out a good deal of line and we will let him have it, but he must come to a stop before long with that

solemn truth to hold Him. He struggles hard, but that sharp text is not soon dislodged from the heart—"O Israel, you have destroyed yourself."

Thus I might continue to show you a sample of the weapons with which God wounds men. He has His two-edged sword, His spear, His arrows, His battle axe, and weapons of war. You say, "I do not feel them." No, and I cannot make you feel them. I have told you before that it is not my arm that can wield them. But when God is pleased to use any of these, the people fall under Him. "Well," says one, "I do not think that I shall be wounded." No, but I am glad you are in the battle, because when the arrows are flying they may strike you as well as anybody else. I have had to deal with wounded ones that I never reckoned upon seeing in such a condition. Oh, what gashes have I seen in men that had been given to all sorts of fashionable sins and who had sneered at religion. They have come here, at first, from the most miserable motives, but they have had to come again and weep and cry before the Lord with broken hearts. You never know where bullets may find their mark. You who are the servants of Satan are on dangerous ground when you come near a faithful ministry. No, I will alter it—you are on blessed ground—where the slain of the Lord have been many and where the people of God are earnestly praying for you. I know at this moment they are putting up the prayer, "Lord, send the arrows home. Send the arrows home." Their prayers will prevail with God and He will bare His arm. There is no mistake about this matter—He "will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion." When He puts His arm to the work, who shall stand against Him? He will do all His pleasure. Glory be to His blessed name, He can wound and He does wound according to His eternal purpose.

Now I will hold up before you *the bottle of balm.* When a soul is wounded, the Lord applies His sacred surgery to the heart. He has healed some of us. The particular bottle of balm which He used in healing me is one which I know well and shall never forget. This was the label, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth, for I am God, and beside Me there is none else." Why, do you know I was afraid of God until I heard that God was in Christ and that I was to look to God in Christ and that the very God whom I dreaded would save me? That revelation came home with divine power to my soul! The preacher said, "Look. This is all that is needed." "There," he said, "a fool can look. A little child can look. A half idiot can look. A dying man can look." "Look," he said, "and it is done." Did I really understand him—that I was only to look to Christ dying on the cross for me and see God making an atonement for my sins in the person of His Son—that I was only to look and I should live at once? It was even so and I did look. My burden passed

away and from that hour I can say what Cowper has so sweetly said in the hymn—

"Ever since by faith I saw the stream
Your flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."

Oh, what a bottle of balm that is—redeeming love! How sweetly it drops into the soul! The Lord shows the wounded man that though he is full of sin, He can put that sin away without any violation of justice when the soul believes in Jesus. Now let the balm drop a minute. "All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned everyone to his own way"—that fact gives us wounds. But now, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"—no balm of Gilead was ever so potent as that. Poor guilty sinner, if you will now trust Christ, your sin is yours no longer. It was laid 1,800 years ago upon the back of Christ, your great Surety. He was punished for it and He has cast it into the depths of the sea. You are forgiven, go in peace.

Here is another drop of balm—when a man is wounded he feels that he cannot help himself—but then there comes in this precious truth—the Spirit of God can do it. God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son and that Spirit helps our infirmities so that, though we know not what we should pray for as we ought, that Spirit is waiting to help us to pray. O you wounded ones, may the great Spirit show you at this time the person of the dear Son of God—God and man. May He show you that person wounded, covered with a bloody sweat, and put to death. And may He sweetly whisper in your ear tonight, "He was your Substitute—He bore that you might never bear the wrath of God." Then you will say as you go out of this house, "He can heal, for He has healed *me.* He has made me leave my despair and even my doubts behind me. Now will I sing unto my Beloved a song—

'***Jesus has become at length***
My salvation and my strength.'"

So have I preached to you nothing but God in Christ Jesus and I am glad to have Him to preach to you. Suppose that there is a bad young man here at this time who has left his home and run away from his father? He has done wrong, very wrong, and instead of going to a tender loving father and saying, "Father, forgive me," he is afraid of punishment and therefore he has run away. There is an advertisement for him in the paper, inviting him to come home. Now, what has he to do to be right with his father? This poor, wandering, wayward, lost boy has got among the very scum of London and he is being ruined and starved to death. What must he do? Boy, you must go home to your father. Go home to your father. He loves you; he is pining for you; he is grieved at heart about you. Oh, if he saw you tonight, it would break his heart to see you

in your rags! He wants you to come home. Do you not see that it would be very foolish for that lad to say, "I shall get into an institution," or "I shall try to earn money." Your father is rich, good, wise, and kind—the best thing you can do is to go home to your father. Going home to your father, all will be right. Now, take up the parable. All of us have left our Father and have journeyed into a far country. We shall never get right again except by going back to Him from whom we have gone astray. And Jesus—God in Christ Jesus—is waiting to welcome us. He is grieving over us right now. We have only to go to Him, for He says that He will never cast out one that comes to Him. "I do not know how He can receive me," says one. Well, go anyway and try Him. "I cannot pray." You can pray, dear friend. "But not properly." Do not try to pray properly. Pray your heart out as you can and ask to be helped. I know that some poor souls are in such a state that they would be glad if we would write them out a prayer. I was talking only a little while ago to one in distress and he said to me, "Oh, Mr. Spurgeon, you do not know how ignorant we are and when we are under a sense of sin, you do not know how foolish we are. If you would sometimes put the very words into our mouths it would do us good." And I thought he was right, because I find the Lord saying in Scripture, "Take with you words and say"—and He tells them what to say.

Come now, poor soul, if you want to find God, let us pray a minute. "O God, save us, for You alone can do it. Of Your great mercy heal our wounds or else we must bleed to death. We cast ourselves upon Your promise in Christ Jesus Your Son—grant us now Your salvation, we beseech You, for His sake. Amen."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
DEUTERONOMY 32:1-39.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—187, 233, 235.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR FRIENDS—I had intended to be home to preach on April 6, but as dear friends at home press me to make the rest longer, I have so far yielded as to wait here another week. And I now propose to be home on the 13th of April. My knees are still feeble, but in all other respects I feel fit to return. Moreover, I long to be preaching in my own pulpit among my own people and I must come home, though I somewhat dread the cold weather. Please pray for me, that I may have an active mind in a body which will allow of its full exercise and that the blessing of God may rest on my future labors far more than on those of past years. I find that

funds are coming in very slowly for the College and the Colportage has a pressing need. Earnest fellow workers will only need to know this.

Yours to serve in love for Jesus' sake,
C. H. SPURGEON,
Mentone, March 20, 1879

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THE THREE WHATS
NO. 1466

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

[On a night when the Tabernacle was thrown open to all comers; the ordinary hearers vacating their seats for the occasion.]

"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places."
Ephesians 1:18-20.

YOU see the text begins with a personal experience within the mind and judgment—"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened." Everything depends upon the opened eyes. The scene may be fair and the light may be bright, but if the sight is gone, all is in vain. Zedekiah had his eyes put out by the king of Babylon and then he was taken down to the imperial city, but as for being able to enjoy anything, he might as well have been in a desert. There were vast halls, palaces, hanging gardens, and a city wall which was the wonder of the world, so that Babylon is called by the prophet, "The glory of kingdoms and the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency"—but the blinded monarch beheld nothing of all the grandeur of the golden city and to him her wealth was as though it had not been. Thus is it with us by nature—we have no apprehension of spiritual things, no power to discern eternal good—our foolish heart is darkened. Therefore, the Lord must first enlighten the eyes of our understanding or else, however precious the truth and however clearly it may be stated, we shall never be able to apprehend it.

I find there is a rendering of the text which runs thus, "The eyes of your heart being enlightened," and it strikes me that this version has about it the appearance of being the correct one, because divine things are usually better seen by the heart than by the understanding. There are a thousand things which God has revealed which we shall never understand and yet we can know them by a loving, trusting experience. Our Savior says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The purifying of the heart is the enlightening of the spiritual eyes. Strange as it may seem, the true eye of the renewed man is seated rather in the heart than in the head—holy affections enable us to see and as far as possible to understand divine things. I pray that in each one of us the eyes of our heart may be enlightened that we may know spiritual things as they are best known.

Now, the prayer of our text was offered for Christians—for converted persons, for those who had faith in Christ Jesus and love to all the saints—yet Paul says that he never ceased to pray that their eyes might be enlightened. Yes, brethren, he who sees most needs to have his eyes

enlightened to see more, for how little as yet of the glory of God have any of us beheld! Even that favored pilgrim who has been led by the shepherds to the top of Mount Clear, to stand there with telescopic glass and gaze into the glories of Immanuel's land has yet only begun to perceive the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. I pray God that if we already see, we may see more, until our eyes shall be so strengthened that the light of the New Jerusalem shall not be too strong for us, but amid the splendor of God which outshines the sun, we shall find ourselves at home.

But if believers need to have their eyes enlightened, how much more must those who are unconverted? They are altogether blind and consequently their need of enlightenment is far greater. They were born blind and the god of this world takes care to further darken their minds; around them there broods a sevenfold midnight, the gloom of spiritual death. "They meet with darkness in the daytime and grope in the noonday as in the night." O blind eye, may Jesus touch you! May the Spirit bring His sacred eye salve to make you see and tonight, though it is not ours to give you eyes, we will tell you what is to be seen, hoping that perhaps while we give the description, God may give you eyes with which to verify our report. Perhaps even the reporting of these things may set you longing for them and when you have but a longing, God will hear you. If that longing is turned into a prayer and that prayer is kindled by a spark of faith, that longing shall be the beginning of light to your soul and you shall see the salvation of God.

Tonight, then, there are two things we shall ask about—*what things are to be seen and known according to the text*? And, secondly, *why it is our anxious desire that every person here should see and know these things*?

I. First, then, WHAT IS TO BE SEEN AND KNOWN ACCORDING TO THE TEXT? When you heard me read it, you must have noticed that it contains three "whats." "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened that you may know *what* is the hope of His calling, and *what* the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and *what* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe." Upon these three "whats" I shall try to speak tonight—may the Holy Spirit speak through me to all your souls.

Our first point is, *"What is the hope of His calling?"* A great many persons never think about religion because they cannot believe that there is much in it. If they had half an idea of what is to be gained by it even now and of the unspeakable blessedness which will come of it throughout eternity, surely their own desire to benefit themselves would incline them diligently to consider it even if they went no further. So promising a matter is at least worth looking into, for it would be a great pity to miss present and eternal happiness if it can be had. But no, they suppose it to be a very small and trifling thing, fit only for the thoughts of priests and women and such weak folk—and so they neglect it, despise it, and look after other business. Tonight, while I try to tell what is the hope of the Christian's calling; I boldly claim your best consideration. If the preacher may not request it on his own account, he may assuredly ask it on the ground that his theme deserves it. Perhaps while we are speaking of the worth of this hope and you are lending an attentive ear, the Lord may

lead you to seek His face. Is it not written, "Incline your ear and come unto Me, hear and your soul shall live"? Many a man has been tempted to start upon a voyage by hearing much of the land to which he sails. Praise his goods and you will find buyers for the merchant. Such is our desire at this time—we would so speak of the hope of our calling as to allure those who are eager after sweets to taste and see that the Lord is good.

The idea of the text seems to me to be illustrated well by the patriarch Abraham. Abraham was living in his father's house in Ur of the Chaldees when a call came to him. That call came from God. He was to separate himself entirely and to get away to a land which he had never seen. What was the hope of that calling? It was the hope that God would give him a seed, and give to that seed a land to dwell in. Thus spoke the Lord unto him—"I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you: and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed." The great nation which should spring from him would possess the land in which he was to wander as a pilgrim and a stranger, according to the word of the Lord—"For all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed forever." For the sake of that hope, Abraham forsook everything and dwelt in tents, a pilgrim and a sojourner with God, living entirely by faith, but living grandly and sublimely—and thus becoming the father of all believers throughout all ages, greater than a prince among the sons of men. Now, there comes to every man who is a true Christian, a call from God. We speak of it by the name of, "effectual calling." The Spirit of God personally applies the truth of Scripture to the heart and makes the chosen man to feel that it belongs to him; the believer perceives that he is separated from others by the sovereign grace of God and that therefore he must come out from the world and no longer live according to the sight of the eyes, and the hearing of the ears, but by faith upon God as seeing Him who is invisible. This makes the believer very different from the rest of mankind. Those who walk by sight do not understand him. They generally misrepresent him and frequently they hate him—but he is content to be unknown, for he remembers it is written, "You are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." "Therefore the world knows us not because it knew Him not."

But what is the prospect which leads the believer to this life? What is the hope of his calling? Brethren, let me describe the hope of those of us who have come out to walk by faith in Christ Jesus. We have already obtained abundantly enough to reward us for obedience to the call and even if nothing were shut up in the closed hand of Hope, her open hand has greatly enriched us. Christian, you already have in possession the forgiveness of your sin, acceptance in Christ, adoption into the divine family, and the nature, rank, and rights of a child of God. You already possess that which makes you among the happiest of mankind and you often feel that if it should turn out that there is no hereafter—and if you should die like a dog—yet still your faith in God has given you such consolation and such strength, such peace and such joy that you would bless God that ever you had it. Our hope has not injured us either as to character or to happiness and even if it turned out to be false, we are at least as well off as the unbeliever. Still, our *main* possession lies in hope.

We carry a bag of spending money in our hands, but the bulk of our wealth is deposited in the Bank of Hope. What, then, is the Christian's hope?

Well, first, he hopes and believes that he shall be under divine protection forever and ever, that he shall be the object of divine love time out of mind and when time shall be no more. He hopes that all things shall work together for his good in the future as he perceives they have done in the past and as he is persuaded they are doing now. He expects a stormy voyage, but because Christ is at the helm, he hopes to come to the fair haven at last. He expects to be tempted, but he hopes to be upheld. He expects to be slandered, but he hopes to be cleared. He expects to be tried, but he hopes to triumph. Sustained by this hope he dreads no labors and fears no difficulties—

"He holds no parley with unmanly fears,
Where duty bids he confidently steers.
Faces a thousand dangers at her call,
And hoping in his God, surmounts them all."

His hope is that all through life, whether that is long or short (and he has not much care about the number of his years), underneath him will be the everlasting arms. He hopes that the Lord will be his shepherd and he shall not want. He hopes that goodness and mercy will follow him all the days of his life. Therefore, he is not afraid to die, for then he expects to come into actual possession of his best possessions. He looks for his best things last. He believes that when it is time for him to depart, Jesus will come and meet him—and the thought of that meeting puts aside all idea of the grim terrors of the grave. His hope leaps over the grave and lands him in a glorious resurrection. Does not the hope of our calling open grandly?

We hope also and have good ground for it, that after death at the Day of Judgment we shall have, as we believe we have now, a perfect justification. A dread judgment will be held. Upon a great white throne reflecting all things and brilliant with its purity, Jesus the Judge of all will sit and He shall separate the mass of mankind into two portions as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. We know that in that day He will discern those who believed in Him and trusted Him and obeyed Him and sought to be like He and we hope that we shall be of that blessed number. For us there shall be no sentence of condemnation, for it is written, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." We hope for a sentence of acquittal and we therefore challenge the judgment which others dread. Clothed with a divine righteousness, we await with expectation the day which shall make the impenitent wish that they had never been born. Hope takes into her consideration the most dreaded of all events and weaves it into her song. The end of all things is not the end of hope. Is not this brave hoping? The hope of a man who sings on forever—living in the circle of divine love, dying beneath the protection of divine power, and abiding in the judgment justified by divine justice—accepted in the Beloved and beloved of the Father.

What else can we hope for? We hope for absolute perfection. The God who has changed our hearts will continue the good work of sanctification till He has taken every sin out of us, every desire for sin, every possibility of sin. We expect Him to renew our minds and prevent our making so many mistakes in judgment. We expect Him to renew our hearts that

they may be wholly set on divine and heavenly things. We expect Him to renew our entire spirit till, when the prince of this world comes, he shall find nothing in us—no tinder for his sparks, no corruption in which to sow his evil seed. We hope to be perfect, even as God is perfect; as Adam, when he came from his Maker's hand, so shall we be and something more, for we shall possess a life in Christ which our unfallen progenitor knew not in Paradise.

We hope also that this body of ours will be perfected. It will lie in the grave and disintegrate into dust unless our Lord Jesus should come before our death—of this we make small account—having no very intense desire to avoid the grave wherein our glorious Redeemer lay. We have nothing to lose, but much to gain by dying, for therein we put off our mortality that at the resurrection we may put on immortality—

"Corruption, earth, and worms
Shall but refine this flesh,
Till when the Lord, our Savior, comes
We put it on afresh."

We expect that then our body shall be raised—changed, but still the same as to identity. For us is the promise of the Scripture—"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death." When our body awakes, though sown in corruption, it shall be raised in incorruption. Though sown in weakness it shall be raised in power. Though sown a body only fit for the soul, it shall be raised a body meet for our highest nature, even for our spirit. As we have borne the image of the earthly we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Our body shall be fashioned like unto the body of Jesus Christ Himself. We are looking forward to a time when we shall have done with aches and pains, with weariness and decay, with old age and its infirmities and with all liability to death. We expect perpetual youth to be our portion and that joy shall thrill through every nerve and sinew of our frame, which now, alas, so often becomes the theater of agony. Yes, this is our hope—perfection of spirit, soul, and body—for Christ has redeemed the whole and He will have the whole to be His inheritance. And in the whole of our manhood His glorious image shall be reflected forever.

What else is the hope of our calling? Why, that being thus cleared in judgment and made absolutely perfect, we shall forever—for eternal duration is the glory of our heritage—we shall forever enjoy infinite happiness. We do not know what form the joys of eternity will take, but they will take such form as shall make us the most happy. We shall have heaven's best, yes God's best, and what that is, who among us can guess, though he uses all his knowledge and gives the reins to his expectancy? "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love Him; but He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit." And, as far as we understand that revelation, we are taught by it that we shall enter into a state of complete rest and perfect peace; a state of holy delight and of serene and blissful activity; a state of perfect praise; a state of satisfaction; a state, probably, of progress, but still of completeness at every inch of the road; a state in which we shall be as happy as we are capable of being, every vessel little or great being filled to the brim. We shall be supremely blessed, for at the right hand of God there are pleasures forevermore. This is the hope of our calling.

Nor even now have we come to an end, for something more yet remains. You say, "Can there be more?" Yes, we expect to be forever in a condition of power, honor, and in relationship to God. We hope to be brought so near to God that all the universe shall distinctly see that we are courtiers of the palace of the great King, yes, princes of the blood royal of the skies. We shall be very near to God, for we shall be with Jesus where He is and sit upon His throne. We shall serve our God and see His face while we serve Him—and His glory will be reflected upon us and from us—and we shall be His dear sons and daughters in Christ Jesus forever and ever. There is not an angel in heaven with whom the meanest saint might wish to change estates, for though the angels excel us now, we shall certainly excel them in the world to come—we shall be nearer the eternal throne than any one of them, inasmuch as Christ Jesus is our brother and not the brother of angels. He is God-and-Man in one person and there was never God and angel in the same union. We shall be next to the Creator—let us speak it with bated breath but leaping heart—we shall be next to the eternal God, one with His only-begotten Son, who is one with Himself. This is the hope of our calling.

Oh, sirs, is not this worth having? Is not this worth striving for? When you count the cost, what cost is worth the counting? Might not a man for this lay down all that he has, yes, and his life also to keep this pearl of great price? And what if you should miss it? What if you should miss it? What if it could be proven, as it never will be, that there are no pains of hell and no eternal wrath—yet is this not enough—to have lost this immortality of glory, this immortality of honor and of likeness to God? This pain of loss—may none of us ever incur it—for it is hell to lose heaven. It is infinite misery to miss infinite happiness. To be within an inch of an immortality of bliss and honor and to let it slip by—will not this be an endless torment to the soul? To clutch the pleasures of an hour, all earth-stained as they are, shall we renounce the ecstasies of eternity? To snatch at bubbles which break before we can grasp them, shall we let unfading glories go? For the mere sake of dwelling at ease by escaping thought shall we let boundless blessings run by us, counting ourselves unworthy of them and so losing them? I pray that you may know "what is the hope of His calling" and that when you know it, you may cry, "I will have it. If it is to be had, by God's grace, I will have it now." So may it be, for Christ's sake.

And now I turn to the second "what" of the text and that is more marvelous still. I am sure I cannot preach the text out—it is too great for me, but here it is—"That you may know *what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.*"

Mark well that God's people are by grace made to be His saints, His select, His holy ones—and then they are viewed as His inheritance. The whole world is God's. The cattle on a thousand hills and all lands and seas are His and yonder starry worlds which in profusion are sown in space are all His. But He deigns to call sanctified men and women His inheritance in a special sense. They are His peculiar treasure, His crown jewels, dear and precious to Him. "The Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." I want you to think of this grand truth, because practical results flow from it. If you and I are believers in Jesus, we are God's inheritance—and the Lord has what the apostle calls, "the

riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." But how can God make riches out of poor men and women? They are believers in Jesus, but what is there in them that He counts to be riches—riches of glory, too?

We answer, first, He has spent riches of love upon them, for He loves them, poor as they are and sick and sorry as they often are. He loved them from before the foundation of the world—and you know how precious a thing becomes when you love it. It is a beloved keepsake and you would not part with it for a mint of gold. It may have little intrinsic value, but if you have long set your heart upon it, how dear it becomes to you. God has loved His people so long and so intensely with such an unbounded love that there is a wealth in them to His heart. Oh, that we knew something of "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" as measured by the gauge of love.

Moreover, the Lord has spent a wealth of wisdom on His saints. A material may be almost valueless at first, but when a wise man has exercised his thought and skill upon it, the value may be enhanced a thousand-fold. But God has thought of His saints forever. Eternal wisdom found her delights with the sons of men and occupied herself on their behalf before the foundation of the world. "How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them!" God's wisdom has exhibited itself at its full in the plan of redemption. I scarcely hear of His deliberating for any purpose except for the salvation of His people, but in that matter we continually read of, "the counsel of His will," to show us that, speaking after the manner of man, the Lord has reasoned within Himself how best to save His own people. His thoughts of wisdom and prudence have been exercised upon His saints and therefore it is that there are riches of glory about them.

What is more, when the riches of His love and of His wisdom had been expended, it came to pass that it was necessary that He should spend a life of suffering upon them. Look to the glorious landscapes of rock and hill and dale and mountain—turn your eye from grassy slope to snowy summit sparkling in the sun—and while you admire all things, remember that God has costlier works than these. None of these cost the Lord an incarnation and a death. Look, if you will, to all the majestic halls of heaven where the lamps of glory are lit with supernal splendor, but neither angel, nor cherubim, nor seraphim cost their Lord bloody sweat. Then look at His people—view "His inheritance in the saints"—for it is there that the Son of God, taking upon Himself human nature, sighed and groaned and sweat great drops of blood and felt the agonies of death. As the Lord looks over all that He has made, He sees nothing that has cost Him suffering and death till He comes to His people. Jesus knows what the saints cost Him. He estimates them at a rate usual among men, for men say, "The price is what it will fetch," and Jesus knows what His people fetched when He redeemed them by giving Himself for them. Measured by that standard, God has indeed riches of glory in His inheritance in the saints.

And then there comes great glory to God from the workmanship which He puts into His people. When He made the world it was with a voice. "He spoke and it was done." When He made the things that are, He had but to will and they stood forth—but in the making of a Christian it

needs the labor of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit must all work to create a new creature in Christ Jesus. The Father must beget, the Son must redeem, the Spirit must regenerate—and when this is done, the Godhead's omnipotence must be put forth to keep a Christian alive and to perfect him and present him "faultless before the presence of God with exceeding joy." An artisan can put into a small piece of iron of no worth at all so much labor that it shall be valued at scores of pounds—and the Triune God can expend so much workmanship upon our poor nature that a man shall be more precious than the gold of Ophir. Valued thus, the Lord may well speak of "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."

Now, as I want if I can to lead you into a sense of this glory for a minute, I should like you to accompany me while I speak somewhat carefully, but yet enthusiastically, about what the Christian becomes when God has perfected His work upon him.

Notice, then, that when at the last the believer shall have been perfected by the work of the Spirit, as he will be, man will be an extraordinary creature. Listen. God has made matter and upon matter has impressed His will and from the tiniest drop to the mightiest orb matter never disobeys the law which God imposes upon it. This is a great triumph. Call it "the law of gravitation" or whatever you will, it is quite certain that all inanimate nature is put under law by the Most High and that it never rebels. Huge as this great universe is, God has as complete power over it as you have over the ball which you toss in your hand. This is glorious, but still it is small glory compared with that which God obtains from His people when they arrive at heaven, for they will not be merely dead, inert matter governed by laws, but they will be full of life and moral freedom—and yet they will be as completely subject to the divine mind as are the atoms of matter. This will be an achievement indeed—to have produced free agents which will be under no control of force, but perfectly at liberty and yet will be forever absolutely obedient to the divine will.

Listen again. The perfected saints will be creatures of a very peculiar form, for they will not be pure spirit, dissociated from matter. I understand yonder spirits before the throne standing in their obedience because they have no materialism to hamper them and drag them down. Angels are spirits without material bodies and they obey God, listening to His commands, but a perfected saint is a creature in which the material is linked with the spiritual. Such are we now and I suppose, in a measure, such shall we abide—and yet there will be no sin in us, no violation of the divine command. Man is a strange mixture. He is next akin to deity and yet he is brother to the worm. We are partakers of the divine nature and the children of God—and yet as to our bodies we are linked to rocks and stones and grosser things. Man renewed by grace touches the center in Christ Jesus, but being man he sweeps the circumference of creatureship and includes within himself a summary of the whole creation. He has been called a microcosm or a little world and so indeed he is. Such a creature God is now perfecting. A being in whom dust and deity each own a kindred. Such a being, purified from taint of evil, shall greatly glorify God.

Think, again, dear friends. There once stood a bright spirit in heaven, leader of the angels, but the place was too high for him and the son of the morning fell from heaven and dragged others with him. God is making, by His grace, beings that will stand next to His throne, but will remain forever reverently loyal. They will be peers in His kingdom, but they will never be proud or ambitious. We, my brethren, though in full possession of our free agency, shall never fall from our eternal glory, but shall be forever faithful. We shall have passed through such an experience of sin, we shall so intensely feel our indebtedness to grace, we shall so fervently love the dear Redeemer that we shall cast our crowns at His feet and we shall ascribe our joy to Him alone and so shall never dream of revolting from Him. God is thus making beings that it will be safe to exalt to honors so near His own—will not this be a triumph of power and goodness? Can you think of it, that you will be one of such favored creatures, if indeed you are a believer?

These beings will have known evil. Think of that. The unfallen angels have never actually known evil, but in restored man shall be fulfilled the devil's lie made into God's truth—"You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." They shall hate evil as the burnt child dreads fire and they shall love righteousness because by righteousness they have been saved—and in righteousness they have been created anew. How wonderful will that creature be which has known sin and remains a free agent—and yet will never yield to folly but abide forever in holiness held by bonds of love. Oh, when I think of the destiny of a child of God, my eyes sparkle, but my tongue refuses to utter what I think. What a being are you, O man! What are you that God should visit you? He has made you "a little lower than the angels," but in Christ Jesus He has crowned you with glory and honor and given you dominion over all the works of His hands, yes, in Christ He has raised you up and made you to sit with Him in the heavenly places, far above principalities and powers and your time to reign and triumph forever is hard at hand. How glorious is God in His people! God in Christ Jesus, seen in the church, who is like unto you?

Now, the point is that if this is the riches of God's glory in His inheritance in the saints, you may read it in another way and say, "This is the riches of our inheritance too, for what shall we be if God is to have us for an inheritance?" Will you miss it? Will you miss it? Will you miss it? If this is a dream, I could wish to die rather than have the illusion dispelled. But it is fact, as God's Word is true. Will you miss it, then? Oh, if there were crowns to be scrambled for, most men are ambitious enough to seek for one, though it might be a curse to them. If there is gold or if there is fame, men have but to hear the chink of the metal or the blast of the trumpet and many stir themselves to win. But here is honor, glory, and immortality in Christ—and it is to be had for the asking, it is to be had by simply believing and trusting in Jesus Christ—will you have it? Oh, foolish hand that is not stretched out to receive it! Oh, foolish heart that does not pray for it! God grant you to know what are the "riches of His inheritance in the saints," that you may seek to be a part in that inheritance and seek it now!

Now, the third "what"—"*What is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set*

Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." I thought I heard somebody saying, "Woe is me! Woe is me! I hear of what man may be, I hear of what God may make of him, but woe is me—it will never come to my lot! I am so weak, so fickle, so irresolute, so frail. Woe is me! I am undone. I have no strength." Now, the third "what" is this—"That you may know what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us, who believe."

Now, learn this and know it, that in the conversion, preservation, and salvation of any one person, God exhibits as great a power as He manifested when He raised Jesus Christ from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. The salvation of no man in the world is by his own strength. It is by the power of God, "for we are His workmanship." This fact should greatly relieve you who are discouraged—the thing is impossible with you—but it is not impossible or even hard with God. He that has worked *us* to the selfsame thing is God and He is quite as able to work it in you, my dear hearer, as to work it in the apostle Paul himself. God can do all things. Now, when our Lord Jesus lay in the tomb, He was dead, but God quickened Him. Jesus was imprisoned in the sepulcher and the stone at the grave's mouth was sealed and guarded—but the stone was rolled away, the guards were frightened, and the Lord of life rose from among the dead. Every sinner is shut up in the tomb of sin by evil habits, but Christ can roll away the stone and the sinner can come forth a living man. Our Lord continued on earth among men for several days and despite human enmity, no man hurt Him for He had received a life and a glory which they could not approach. The saints also abide here among men and many seek to destroy them, but God has given them a new life which can never be destroyed, for He has hedged it about from all its adversaries. All the powers of darkness fought against the Lord Jesus Christ, but through the power of God, He conquered them all. I think I see Him now, ascending up on high leading captivity captive in the power of God. So, my brethren, you will be opposed by the powers of darkness and by your own evil heart, but you shall conquer, for God will put forth the same power in you which He manifested in His dear Son and you too shall lead captivity captive. I see the Lord Jesus entering the pearly gates and climbing to His throne. There He sits and none can bring Him down. And you too, believing in Jesus, shall have the same power to tread down all your foes, your sins, your temptations, till you shall rise and sit where Jesus sits at the right hand of God. The very same power which raised Christ is waiting to raise the drunkard from his drunkenness, to raise the thief from his dishonesty, to raise the Pharisee from his self-righteousness, and to raise the Sadducee from his unbelief. God has power among the sons of men and this power He puts forth in making them to be a people that shall show forth His praise. Oh, that you knew what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, because then you would fling away despair. There remains nothing for you in this case but to submit to the divine power. God will work in you—be willing to be worked upon. O Spirit of the Lord, work in our hearers this good will. Drop yourselves like plastic clay at the potter's feet and He will put you on the wheel and mold you at His pleasure. Be willing, it is all He asks you—be trustful, it is all His gospel requires of you and indeed both will and trust He gives

you. "If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land." Be willing to let go of the sin which ruins you. Be willing to learn the truth which will renew you. Be willing to sit at Jesus' feet. Be willing to accept a finished salvation at His hands and all the power that is needed to lift you from this place to the starry gates of heaven is waiting to be shed upon you. God give you to know this and so to rest in Jesus and be saved.

II. The last word is to be upon the second head—WHY WE WISH YOU TO SEE AND KNOW ALL THIS. I have in effect been all along enforcing this second head as the sermon has progressed and so I shall not need to detain you many minutes, except with a practical recapitulation.

We want you to know *the hope of His calling* that you may not neglect it, nor set anything in competition with it. I tried, as my poor words enabled me, to tell you what a hope the calling of God gives the Christian. I charge you, do not let it go. I shall probably never meet the most of you again and if any shall say to you afterwards, "Well, what did the man say?" I would like you to be compelled to say, "He said this—that there is a future before us of such glory that he charged us not to lose it. There are the possibilities of such an intense delight forever and ever that he besought us to ensure that delight by accepting Christ and His way of salvation."

Next we want you to believe *the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,* that you may see where your hope lies. Your hope lies in not being your own any more, but in being the Lord's and so realizing "the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints." The saints belong to their Lord—your salvation will be found in experientially knowing that you are not your own because you are bought with a price—yes, in admitting at this moment that your honor and happiness are found in being the Lord's. If you are your own, you will spend yourself and be ruined—but if you are Christ's—He will take care of you. Oh, if I thought that I had a hair of this head that belonged to only myself, I would tear it out. But to be owned by Jesus altogether—spirit, soul, and body—to be Christ's man in the entireness of my being, this, I say, is glory, immortality, and eternal life. Be your own and you will be lost. Be Christ's and you are saved.

The closing thought is this. We want you to know *the exceeding greatness of God's power* that you may not doubt or despond or despair, but come now and cast yourselves upon the incarnate God and let Him save you. Yield yourselves unto Him that the great glory of His power may be manifest in you as in the rest of His people. I am loth that you should go until you have really hidden these things in your hearts to ponder them in the days to come. I set bread before you—do not merely look at it, but eat a portion now and carry the rest home to eat in secret. Our preaching is often too much like a fiddler's playing. People come to see how it is done and then they pass round the question, "What did you think of him?" Now, I do not care two straws what you think of *me*, but I do care a whole world what you think of Christ and of yourselves and of your future state. I pray you forget the way in which I put things, for that may be very blundering and faulty. But if there is anything in the things themselves, consider them with care. If you judge the Bible to be a fraud and that there is no heaven to be had, then go—sport and laugh as you

please—for you will only act consistently with your erroneous imagination. But if you believe God's Word to be true and that there is a glorious hope connected with the Christian's high calling, then in the name of prudence and common sense, why do you not seek it? Give no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids till you find it. I ask the Lord's people here present and I know that there are many such in the audience tonight, to pray that this appeal may have an effect upon many in this great crowd—that they may seek the Lord at once with full purpose of heart. O Spirit of God, work it, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
EPHESIANS 1; 2:1
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—176, 757, 728.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR FRIENDS—Accept my most loving salutations. May all grace abound towards each one of you and may your joy and peace be multiplied thereby.

I feel daily improving in health and strength; only my knees remain feeble. I still adhere to my determination, if the Lord wills, to preach on Lord's-Day, April 13. May His presence then be with us all.

I earnestly entreat the prayers of all who know how to plead with God that when I return among you it may be in the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit and that my usefulness may be increased a hundredfold. Surely all the suffering I have endured and all the rest I have enjoyed should bring forth some fruit unto God. Yet so feeble are we that we profit nothing unless the Spirit of the Lord quickens us. By all the affectionate interest which you have up to now shown in my ministry, intercede for me, I beseech you, that I may yet be made a blessing to myriads,

Yours in heartiest love,
C.H. SPURGEON
Mentone, March 27, 1879

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THE OIL AND THE VESSELS
NO. 1467A

A SERMON
WRITTEN AT MENTONE,
BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me another vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil ceased."
2 Kings 4:6.

SO long as there were vessels to be filled, the miraculous flow of oil continued and it only ceased when there were no more jars to contain it. The prophet spoke no word to stop the multiplying process and the Lord did not set any boundary to the bountiful marvel—the poor widow was not straitened in God, but in her supply of empty vessels! Nothing else in the universe restrained the flow of oil, but the want of vessels to receive the oil stopped it at once. The vessels failed before the oil—our powers of receiving will give out long before God's power of bestowing.

This is true in reference to our PROVIDENTIAL CIRCUMSTANCES. So long as we have needs, we shall have supplies and we shall find our necessities exhausted far sooner than the divine bounty. In the wilderness there fell more manna than the tribes could eat and there flowed more water than the hosts could drink, and as long as they were in a desert land and required this provision, it was given to them. When they reached Canaan and fed on the old corn of the land, the special supplies ceased—but not till then. In the same manner the Lord will feed His people till they need no more.

The widow's apparent source of supply was only one pot of oil, but this continued to stream forth as vessel by vessel was placed underneath it. So shall the little, with which the Lord endows His poor people, continue to be sufficient from day to day till the last day of life, like the last vessel, shall have been filled. Some are not content with this, but would have the oil run beyond the last vessel, even after their deaths, never resting till they have hoarded their thousands and have buried their hearts in gold dust. If the oil will but run till the last vessel is full, what more do

we want? If providence secures us food and raiment till we end this mortal life, what more can we require?

Doubtless in the dispensation of wealth and other talents to His servants, the Lord considers their capacities. If they had more vessels, they should have more oil. The infinitely wise God knows that it is better for some men to be poor than rich—they would not be able to bear prosperity and so the oil does not flow, because there is not a vessel to fill. If we are able to receive an earthly gift, it will then be a good thing to us and the Lord has declared that He will not withhold any good thing from those who walk uprightly. But a talent which we could not receive so as to use it properly would be only a curse to us and therefore He does not burden us with it. All that we can hold we shall have—all that we really need, all that we shall be sure to employ to His glory, all that will minister to our highest good—God will pour forth from His inexhaustible fullness and only when He sees that the gifts would be wasted by becoming superfluities, or burdensome responsibilities, or occasions for temptation, will He restrain His power and the oil shall cease. Rest assured that God's bounty will keep pace with your true capacity and "verily you shall be fed."

The same principle holds good with regard to THE BESTOWAL OF SAVING GRACE. In a congregation, the gospel is as the pot of oil and those who receive from it are needy souls, desirous of the grace of God. Of these we have always too few in our assemblies. Many are the vessels of oil, filled to the brim and fastened down—the full Pharisee, the self-satisfied professor, and the proud worldling are such—for these the miracle of grace has no multiplying power for they are ready to overflow even now. A full Christ is for empty sinners and for empty sinners only. As long as there is a really empty soul in a congregation, the Word of God will go forth as a blessing, but no longer.

It is not our emptiness, but our fullness which can hinder the outgoings of free grace. While there is one soul conscious of sin and eager for pardon, grace will flow. Yes, while there is one heart weary of indifference and anxious to be wounded, grace will flow. "I feel," says one, "exceedingly unfit to be saved." You are evidently empty and there is room in you for the oil of grace. "Alas," cries a second, "I feel nothing at all; even my own unfitness does not distress me." This only shows how utterly empty you are, and in you also the oil will find space for its flow. "Ah!" sighs a

third, “I have become skeptical. Unbelief has made me hard as the nether millstone.” In you also there is large storage for grace. Only be willing to receive. Stand like the oil jar with opened mouth, waiting for the oil to pour forth from the miraculous pot. If the Lord has made you willing to receive, He will not be long before He has given you grace upon grace. O that we could meet with more emptied souls! Why should the Lord’s wonders be cut short for lack of persons who need to have them worked upon them? Are there no needy souls about? Have all men waxed rich or is it a vain presumption which possesses so many hearts? Hidden away in corners where they weep their eyes out because they cannot weep and break their hearts because their hearts will not break—and cry before the Lord because they feel they cannot pray, or feel, or hate sin—hidden away in corners, I say, there are truly empty souls and for these the heavenly oil is still running, is running *now*. “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” No exception in the narrative before us was taken to any vessel so long as it was empty. There was one qualification and only one—the power to receive indicated by emptiness. Come, then, you needy souls, come to the eternal fountain and receive a wealth of blessing, freely given because you need it and because the Lord Jesus loves to bestow it.

The same is true with regard to OTHER SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS. All fullness dwells in our Lord Jesus and as He needs not grace for Himself, it is stored up in Him that He may give it out to believers. The saints with one voice confess, “Of His fullness have we all received.” The limit of His outpouring is our capacity to receive and that limit is often set by our straitened prayers, “We have not because we ask not or because we ask amiss.” If our desires were more expanded, our receipts would be more extended. We fail to bring empty vessels and therefore the oil is stopped. We do not sufficiently see our poverty and do not, therefore, enlarge our longings. O for a heart insatiable for Christ, a soul more greedy than the grave itself which is never satisfied, then would rivers of the heavenly oil flow in upon us and we should be filled with all the fullness of God.

Frequently we limit the Holy One of Israel by our unbelief. Nothing hinders grace like this impoverishing vice. “He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” Unbelief declares it to be impossible that more oil should come from the oil pot and so refuses to bring more vessels under the pretense of a humble fear of presumption and

thus robbing the soul and dishonoring the Lord. Shame on you, you mother of famine, you drier up of flowing wells! What shall be done unto you, you lying traitor! What coals of juniper are fierce enough for you, you wicked unbelief? We mourn that our joy is departed, that our graces languish, that our usefulness is restrained. Whose fault is this? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these His doings? No, verily, we have ourselves stayed the bottles of heaven. May infinite mercy save us from ourselves and lead us now to "bring here vessels, even empty vessels not a few."

Pride also has a horrible power to stop the divinely-given oil. When on our knees we feel no pressing necessity, no urgent need, no special danger, and on the contrary, we feel we are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing, do we wonder then that we are not refreshed and feel no delight in the holy exercise? Have we not heard the Lord saying, "Bring Me another vessel"? And as we have answered, "There are no more vessels," can we be surprised that the oil is stayed? May the Lord save us from the parching influence of conceit. It will turn an Eden into a wilderness. Poverty of soul leads to fullness, but carnal security creates barrenness. The Holy Spirit delights to comfort every hungry heart, but the full soul loathes the honeycomb of the Spirit's consolations and leaves it to itself till it is famished and cries out for heavenly bread. Of this one thing let us be sure—that there is abundance of grace to be had so long as we hunger and thirst after it—and never shall a single willing heart be forced to cry, "The oil is stayed," so long as it has an empty vessel to bring.

The same truth will be proved in reference to THE PURPOSES OF GRACE IN THE WORLD. The fullness of divine grace will be equal to every demand upon it till the end of time. Men will never be saved apart from the atonement of our Lord Jesus, but never will that ransom price be found insufficient to redeem the souls that trust in the Redeemer—

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

Neither will His intercession lose any of its prevalence for those who come to God by Him. To the last hour of time it shall never be said that a single sinner has sought His face in vain or that an empty vessel has at last been found which Jesus cannot fill.

The power of the Holy Spirit to convict, convert, console, and sanctify shall also abide the same to the end of the age. Never will there be found a weeping penitent whom He cannot cheer with a lively hope and lead to Jesus for eternal salvation, nor a struggling believer whom He cannot lead on to certain and complete victory. Perfection itself, He shall always be able to work in all the saints, even meetness for their holy heritage above. None of us should despond when we discover anew our own natural inability and deadness. Our hope was never based on created power—a lively hope has its foundation in the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit—and that cannot be the subject of question or of change. For the salvation of all the elect, the sacred Trinity will work together till all shall be accomplished.

Whatever remains behind as to the purposes of God, He has power to achieve. If there should stand before us a row of empty vessels bearing the names of Babylon overthrown, the Jews converted, the nations evangelized, the idols abolished, and so forth, we must by no means be disheartened, for all these vessels of promise shall be filled in due time. The church of the present day is feeble and her supplies are quite inadequate to the enterprise before her, yet as out of one pot of oil many vessels were filled which were far greater than itself—so by His poor and despised church, through the foolishness of preaching—the Lord will fulfill His august designs and fill the universe with praise. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." With this assurance, believing men may boldly go forth among the heathen. The nations are empty vessels and there are not a few of them. God has given us His blessing upon our cruse of oil and all we have to do is to pour out and continue to pour out till there is not a vessel left. We are very far from that consummation—even in our congregations all are not saved—even in our families many are not converted. We cannot say, "There is not a vessel left," and blessed be God, neither may we suspect that the oil will be stayed. With hopeful earnestness let us bring the empty vessels beneath the sacred outflow that they may be filled.

How glorious will be the consummation when all the chosen shall be gathered in! Then there shall not remain a seeking soul to be saved, or a praying heart to be comforted, or a wandering sheep to be sought. Not a vessel shall be found throughout the universe needing to be filled and then shall the oil of mercy cease to flow and justice hold her court alone.

Woe unto the ungodly in that day, for then the empty vessels shall be broken to shivers, as they would not receive the oil of love, they shall be each one filled with the wine of wrath. From which terrible doom may infinite grace preserve each one of us. Amen.

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TWO SORTS OF HEARERS
NO. 1467B

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

"But be you doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if any is a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholds himself, and goes his way, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was. But whoever looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." James 1:22-25.

JAMES has no speculations. "By their fruits you shall know them," seems to have taken possession of his mind and he is always demanding practical holiness. He is not satisfied with the buds of hearing—he wants the fruits of obedience. We need more of his practical spirit in this age, for there are certain ministers who are not content with sowing the old seed, the same seed which, from the hand of apostles, confessors, fathers, reformers, and martyrs produced a harvest unto God. They spend their time in speculating as to whether the seed of tares grown under certain circumstances may not bring forth wheat—whether at any rate good wheat would not be the better for the admixture of just a little sprinkling of tare seed. We need somebody to take these various theories, put them into a cauldron, boil them down, and see what is the essential practical product of each of them. Some of you may have seen in the newspapers a short time ago an article which fastened itself upon my mind—an article with regard to the moral state of Germany. The writer, himself a German, says that the skepticism of the professed preachers of the Word, the continual doubts which have been suggested by scientific men and more especially by professedly religious men as to revelation, have now produced upon the German nation the most frightful consequences. The picture which he gives makes us fear that our German friends are treading upon a volcano which may explode beneath their feet. The authority of the government has been so severely exercised that men are beginning to weary of it and meanwhile the authority of God has been put so much out of the question that the basis of society is undermined. I need not, however, ground my remarks upon that article, for the French Revolution at the end of the last century remains in history as an

enduring warning as to the dread effects of philosophy when it has cast suspicion upon all religion and created a nation of infidels. I pray God that the same may not happen here, but the party of "modern thought" seems resolved upon repeating the experiment. So greatly is the just severity of God ignored and so trifling an evil is sin made out to be that if men were to be doers of what they hear and carry out what has been taught from certain professedly Christian pulpits, anarchy would be the result. Free-thinking always leads that way. God keep us from it.

While preachers too often toy with preaching, how much there is among hearers of the same fashion? Hearing is often merely a critical exercise and the question after a sermon is not, "How was that truth fitted to your case?" but, "How did you like *him?"* as if that had anything to do with it. When you hear music, do you ask, "How did you like the trumpet?" No, it is the music—not the instrument—that your mind thinks about. Yet many persons always consider the minister rather than his message. Many contrast one preacher with another when they should contrast themselves with the divine law. Thus, hearing the gospel is degraded into a pastime and judged to be little better than a theatrical entertainment. Such things must not be. Preachers must preach as for eternity and look for fruit—and hearers must carry out what they hear or otherwise the sacred ordinance of preaching will cease to be the channel of blessing and will rather be an insult to God and a mockery to the souls of men. I shall not at great length, but I hope with much earnestness, speak of two classes of hearers—*the unblessed class* and the second, *the class who,* according to the text, *are blessed in their deed.*

I. First, THE UNBLESSED CLASS. They are hearers, but they are described as *hearers who are not doers*. They hear—some of them pretty regularly, others of them only now and then just to while away an hour—and they hear with considerable attention because they appreciate good speaking. They are interested in doctrine, perhaps having a little knowledge of the Christian system, and they like to discuss a point or two. Moreover, they are anxious to be able to say that they heard such a one preach, of whom his fame has gone abroad. But as to doing what they hear, that has not entered their minds. They have heard a sermon on repentance, but they have not repented. They have heard the gospel cry, "Believe!" but they have not believed. They know that he who believes purges himself from his old sins, yet they have had no purging, but abide as they were. Now, if I address such, let me say to them—it is clear that you are and must be unblessed. Hearing of a feast will not fill you. Hearing of a brook will not quench your thirst. The information that there is gold in the Bank of England will not enrich you—you need cash

in your own pocket. The knowledge that there is a shelter from the storm will not save the ship from the storm. The information that there is a cure for a disease will not make the sick man whole. No, gifts must be grasped; blessings must be appropriated and made use of if they are to be of any value to us. O sirs, you know what you should do—but you have not done it! You have been half-inclined to attend to eternal things, but you have let them go and so you are still among those unblessed hearers who hear in vain.

Next, these hearers are described as *deceiving themselves*. "Deceiving your own selves," says James. What did they deceive themselves about? Why, probably they thought they were considerably better for being hearers—much to be commended and sure to get a blessing. They would not have been happy if they had not heard the Word on Sunday and they look with disgust upon their neighbors who make nothing of the Sabbath. They themselves are very superior people because they are regular church-goers or chapel-goers. They have a sitting, a hymnbook, and a Bible—is not that a good deal? If they stayed away from a place of worship for a month, they would be very uneasy, but though they do not believe that going to a place of worship will save them, yet it quiets their conscience and they feel themselves more at ease. I should like to feed you for a month on your theory. I would rattle the plates in your ears and see whether you would be fed. I would not accommodate you with a bed at night. Why should I? I would preach you a discourse upon the benefit of sleep. Nor need I even give you a room to occupy—I would read you an eloquent dissertation upon domestic architecture and show you what a house should be. You would very soon quit my door and call me inhospitable, if I gave you music instead of meat, and yet you deceive yourselves with the notion that merely hearing about Jesus and His great salvation has made you better men. Or perhaps the deceit runs in another line—you foster the idea that the stern truths which you hear do not apply to you. Sinners? Yes, certainly—the preacher addresses sinners and they may get good out of it—but *you* are not a sinner, at least not in any special sense so as to need looking after. Repentance? Most people ought to repent, but you do not see any reason why *you* should repent. Looking to Christ for salvation? "Excellent doctrine," you say, "excellent doctrine!" But, somehow, *you* do not look to Him for salvation. Here is the scriptural verdict upon this opinion of yours—"Deceiving your own selves." The gospel does not deceive you, it tells you, "You must be born again, you must believe in Jesus Christ or be lost." The preacher does not deceive you. He never said half a word to support the notion that coming to this place would be of any service to you unless you would yield your hearts

to Christ. No, he has learned to speak plain English about such matters. You deceive yourselves if, being hearers and not doers, you derive comfort from that which you hear.

And then, again, according to our text, *these people are superficial hearers*. They are said to be like a man who sees his natural face in a glass. Now, even a casual hearer will often find the preaching of the gospel to be like looking in a glass and seeing himself. When a glass was first exhibited to some fresh discovered Negro tribe, the chieftain as he sees himself is perfectly astonished. He looks and looks again and cannot make it out. So is it in the preaching of the Word—the man says, "Why, those are my words. That is my way of feeling." I have often known hearers exclaim, "Why, that is the very expression I used as I was coming along." They feel like her of old who said, "Come, see a man which told me all things that I ever did." Such a person reads his Bible and he says, "Come, see a book which tells me all things that I ever did. Is not this God's book?" The fact is that the Word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. As you have seen hanging up in the butcher's shop the carcasses of animals cut right down the center, so the Word of God is "quick and powerful, piercing to the dividing of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow." It opens up a man to himself and makes him see himself. He is quite astonished and cannot make it out. I have no doubt many of you who are unconverted here have felt this under a searching sermon. When you have been reading the Scriptures you have been perfectly astonished at the way in which you have been revealed to yourselves—but it has been superficial work. If a man looks at himself in a glass and then puts down the mirror and goes his way, he has made but very poor use of it, for it was intended to lead him to remove spots and improve his personal appearance by washing. Looking in the glass and noticing a black mark on your forehead is mere child's play if you do not wash the spot away. To see yourself as God would have you see yourself in the glass of Scripture is something, but you must afterwards go to Christ for washing or your looking is very superficial work. God grant that if you are made to feel the revealing power of the Word of God you may at once come to the practical point and "wash and be clean."

The text accuses these persons of being *hasty hearers*—"he beholds himself and goes his way." They hear a sermon and they are off. They never give the Word time to operate—they are back to business, back to talk and idle chit-chat the moment the service ends. Inquirers' Meetings are often eminently useful because they give people a little opportunity to think over what they have heard—while much of hearing is not followed up with thought and so it is ineffectual. We get much more out of medi-

tation than out of hearing. Like the cattle, we must chew the cud if we would get nutriment from spiritual food, but few do this. It is a great mercy for us, considering the quantity of nonsense there is in the world that we have two ears so that we can let idle words go in one ear and out the other. But it is a great pity that we should use those two ears in such a way in reference to the Word of God. Let it have a lodgment, dear friend. Do not let the gospel come in one ear and out the other. How are you to prevent it? Why let it come in both ears. Let it have two roads right down to the soul and shut your ears when the truth has thoroughly entered in and compel it to abide in the chamber of your soul. How much of blessing would come to men if they carried the Word home with them. How much a blessing they would receive if they took the text to pieces, weighed it, considered it, and prayed for a personal application of it. Then they would become spiritually wise by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. But alas, they are hasty hearers—they look in the glass and go their way.

One other thing is said about them, namely, that they are *very forgetful hearers*—they forget what manner of men they are. They have heard the discourse and that is the end of it. You know the story of Donald's coming home a little sooner from church than usual and his wife inquiring, "What! Donald! Is the sermon all done?" He replied, "No, no, it is all *said*, but it has not begun to be done yet." But while it has not begun to be done, it often happens that the sermon has ended with many hearers. They have listened to it, but it has ran through them like water through a sieve and they will remember no more of it till the judgment day. There is no sin in having a bad memory, but there is great sin in refusing at once to obey the gospel. If you cannot remember the text or even remember the subject tomorrow morning, I shall not blame you, but the remembrance of the spirit of the whole thing, the drinking in and absorption into yourself of the truth—that is the main matter and the carrying of the truth into practice is the essence of the business. That traveling dealer did well who, while listening to Mr. William Dawson, when he was speaking about dishonesty, stood up in the midst of the congregation and broke a certain yard measure with which he had been in the habit of cheating his customers. That woman did well who said that she forgot what the preacher talked about, but she remembered to burn her bushel when she got home, for that too had been short in measure. Never mind about remembering the sermon if you remember at once to practice it! You may forget the words in which the truth was couched if you will, but let it purify your life. It reminds me of the gracious woman who used to earn her living by washing wool. When her minister called upon her and

asked her about his sermon and she confessed that she had forgotten the text, he said, "What good could it have done you?" She took him into her back place where she was carrying on her trade. She put the wool into a sieve and then pumped on it. "There, sir," she said, "your sermon is like that water. It runs through my mind, sir, just as the water runs through the sieve. But then the water washes the wool, sir, and so the good Word washes my soul." David, in the 103rd Psalm, speaks of those who remember the Lord's commandments *to do* them—and that is the best of memory. Mind that you have it.

Thus I have described certain hearers and I fear we have many such in all congregations—admiring hearers, affectionate hearers, attached hearers—but all the while unblessed hearers because they are not doers of the work. We have wondered how it was that they never confessed themselves to be followers of Christ, but we suspect that they have never made such a confession because it would not be true. And yet they are very good, very kind—helpful to a good cause and their lives are very upright and commendable—but we grieve that they are not decided Christians. One thing they lack—they have no faith in Christ. It does surprise me how some of you can be so favorable to everything that has to do with divine things and yet have no personal share in the good treasure. What would you say of a cook who prepared dinners for other people and yet died of starvation? Foolish cook, you say. Foolish hearer, I say! Are you going to be like Solomon's friends, the Tyrians, who helped to build the temple and yet went on worshipping their idols? Sirs, are you going to look on at the table of mercy, admire it, and yet refuse its provisions? Does it give you a thrill of pleasure to see so many taken from the highways and the hedges and brought in and will you stand outside and never partake yourself? I always pity the poor little boys on a cold winter night who stand outside a steaming cook shop window and look in and see others feasting, but have none themselves. I cannot understand you. All things are ready and you are bid and persuaded to come—and yet you are content to perish with hunger. I pray you think of yourselves and I ask the Spirit of God to make you doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

II. But, now, a few minutes for those who are BLESSED HEARERS—those who get the blessing. Who are they? They are described in the 25th verse—"But whoever looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

Now, notice that this hearer who is blessed is, first of all, *an earnest, eager, humble hearer*. Note the expression. He does not look *upon* the law

of liberty and go his way, but he looks *into* it. It is the same word which is used in the passage, "which things the angels desire to look into," and the Greek seems to imply a sort of stooping down to look intently into a thing. Thus is it with the hearer who obtains the blessing—he hears of the gospel and he says, "I will look into this. There is a something here worth attention." He stoops and becomes a little child that he may learn. He searches as men do who are looking after diamonds or gold. "I will look into it," he says. "My mother used to tell me that there was something charming in it and my father died triumphantly through the influence of it—I will investigate it. It shall not be for lack of examination that I let it slip." Such an individual hears intently and earnestly, laying his soul open to the influences of the truth, desiring to feel its holy power, and to practice its divine commands. That is the right kind of hearer—an earnest listener whose senses are all awakened to receive and retain all that can be learned.

It is implied too that he is a *thoughtful, studious, searching hearer*—he looks into the perfect law. I call you back to the figure. As a man will put an insect under a glass and inspect it again and again through the microscope—looking at the wings, at each joint of the back, and at every part of the creature under his eye—so a hearer who desires a blessing looks closely into the Word. He is sacredly curious. He inquires. He pries. He asks all those who should know. He likes to get with old Christians to hear of their experiences. He loves to compare spiritual things with spiritual—to dissect a text and see how it stands in relation to another—and to its own parts, for he is in earnest when he hears the Word. Alas, dear friends, as I have said before, many hearers are too superficial. They listen to what is said and that is the end of it—they never search for the marrow of the bones. The hearer who obtains a blessing, first gives his whole heart up to attention and afterwards keeps his heart saturated with the truth by an earnest, diligent, searching study of it. And so by the Spirit's teaching, he discovers what is the mind of God to his soul.

Then this hearer goes further. Looking so steadily *he discovers that the gospel is a law of liberty*—and indeed it is so. Blessed is the condition of those who are free from the law of Moses and have come under law to Christ who emancipates the soul from every form of bondage. There is no joy like the joy of pardon. There is no release like release from the slavery of sin. There is no freedom like the liberty of holiness, the liberty to draw near to God. He who hears the gospel aright soon discovers that there is that in it which will remove every fetter from his soul. He looks and looks, and at last loves that perfect law of liberty which sets his heart at large to run in the way of God's commands. Would God that all of you

understood it, and had a share in its benefits. This is the man who is blessed while he hears.

But it is added that *he continues therein*. If you hear the gospel and it does not bless you, hear it again. If you have read the Word of God and it has not saved you, read it again. It is able to save your soul. Have you been searching through one gracious, earnest book and did it not seem to fit your case? Try another. Oh, if men would search for salvation as they search after hidden treasure it would not be long before they found it. I remember, when I was seeking Christ, how I read through Doddridge's, "Rise and Progress of Religion" with an avidity such as I showed when as a boy I read some merry tale, for I devoured each page greedily. When I had done with Doddridge, I read Baxter's, "Call to the Unconverted," which did me good, but yielded me no comfort. I read each page and drank in every word, though the book was exceedingly bitter to me. I wanted Christ and if I could find Him and eternal life through Him, it did not matter to me how often my eyes grew weary with want of sleep while reading. Oh, if you come to that—that you must have Jesus—you shall have Him. If your soul is brought to feel that you will search heaven and earth through, if needful, but you will find the Savior, that Savior will soon appear to you. The hearer who gains salvation, "looks into the perfect law of liberty," *and continues therein.*

Lastly, it is added that this man is not a forgetful hearer, but *a doer of the work* and he shall be blessed in his deed.

Is he bidden to pray? He prays as best he can. Is he bidden to repent? He asks God to enable him to repent. Is he bidden to believe? He says, "Lord, I believe: help my unbelief." He turns everything that he hears into practice. I wish that we had thousands of hearers of that sort. I remember reading of a certain person who heard of giving a 10th of our substance to God. "Well," said he, "that is right and I will do it." And he kept his promise. He heard that Daniel drew near to God three times a day in prayer. He said, "That is right; I will do it." And he practiced a threefold approach to the throne of grace each day. He made it a rule every time he heard of something that was excellent, to practice it at once. Thus he formed holy habits and a noble character, and became a blessed hearer of the Word.

Now, dear friends, our text does not say that such a man is blessed *for* the deed, but it says that such a man is blessed *in* the deed. He who does what God bids him shall not be blessed *for* it, but he shall be blessed *in* it. The happy result will come to us in the act of obedience. May God grant you grace henceforth whenever the gospel is preached, to stir yourself up with the energy which God's Spirit infuses into you and say, "I

will do it. I will not dream about it or talk about it or question about it or say I will do it and put it off, but now at once the act commanded shall be done."

I finish with this practical suggestion. The remaining portion of life is short with some of you who hear me this day. Gray hairs are upon you here and there and according to the course of nature, you must soon stand before your Judge. Would it not be well that you thought about another world and considered how you shall face your Lord at the last great day? The gospel says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," which, in other words, means, "Trust Him." Repent. Confess your sin, forsake it and look to Christ for cleansing. That is the way of salvation—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." You know all about the way of life. I am telling you a tale which you have heard a thousand times, but the question is, *when is it going to be done*? "Soon, sir," you say. But were you not here when this Tabernacle was opened? "Yes," you say, "I think I was." You said, "soon," then, and you say, "soon," now! You will say "soon," I expect, until that word "soon" will be met with the heavy sentence—"Too late! Too late! You cannot enter now!" Take heed that this is not your case before this day has closed. Some men die very suddenly. A sister came to me this morning and said, "My father is dead. He was well in the morning. He came home from the shop, seemed a little ill, and died all of a sudden." Seeing that life is so precarious, would it not be best that you should immediately seek the Lord while He may be found and call upon Him while He is near? I would suggest that you do not begin gossiping and talking on the way home today, but that you get alone quietly for a little while. Do you reply that you have no place where you can be alone—this is not true—you can find some place or other. I remember a sailor who used to find his prayer closet at the masthead—nobody came up there to disturb him. I knew a carpenter who used to get down in a sawpit to pray. There are many such places. The streets of London when crowded are about as lonely as anywhere and Cheapside may be as good as the mountain side if your heart desires real solitude.

Some of you, I fear, never think at all. As far as thinking goes, if your brains were taken out many of you would get on almost as well without them. The brains of some people are only useful as a sort of salt to keep them from rotting by death. Little thinking is done by the great mass of the people except the thought, "What shall we eat and what shall we drink?" Do, I pray you, think a little; pause and consider what God the Lord sets before you. Be a doer of the work. Do what God bids you. As He bids you repent, repent. As He bids you believe, believe. As He bids you pray, pray. As He bids you accept His grace, God helping you, do it. Oh,

that it might be done at once and to the Lord shall be praise world without end. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JAMES 1.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—483, 538, 992.

P.S. If those who profit by these sermons will promote their circulation, they may be doing as much good as if they preached themselves. The preacher, in returning to his pulpit, would feel greatly cheered if he found that the circulation of the sermons largely increased. A judicious word may gain a subscriber to whom the reading may be useful. Would not some of our readers find the distribution of the discourses an easy and efficient mode of Christian service?

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[Brother Spurgeon wrote the above postscript in 1879. I ask you to consider printing and distributing this sermon and others of the **63 Volumes** for HIS glory. There is a link on our site which enables you to *print* **all 63 volumes** of the sermons in *booklet format*. You will need special software and a special stapler to do this, but it is not very expensive, and can be found at many office supply stores. Or you may contact us and we will tell you where we got our software and stapler. The link is **"Booklet Format"** at http://www.spurgeongems.org/booklet.htm and of course the site, **Spurgeon Gems,** is at http://www.spurgeongems.org. Ann and my prayer for you is Paul's to the Ephesians in 3:17-19—**EOD**.]

THE PHILOSOPHY AND PROPRIETY OF ABUNDANT PRAISE
NO. 1468

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 13, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness, and shall sing of Your righteousness."
Psalm 145:7.

THIS is called "David's Psalm of Praise" and you will see that all through it he is inflamed by a strong desire that God may be greatly magnified. Hence he uses a variety of expressions and repeats himself in his holy vehemence. Run your eyes down the psalm and notice such words as these—"I will extol You." "I will bless Your name." "Every day will I bless You." "I will praise Your name forever and ever." "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised." "One generation shall praise Your works to another." "I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty." "Men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts" and other words of the same meaning down to the last verse—"My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever." David is not content with declaring that Jehovah is worthy of praise or with pleading that His praise ought to be felt in the heart, but he will have it publicly spoken of, openly declared, plainly uttered, and joyfully proclaimed in song. The inspired Psalmist, moved by the Holy Spirit, calls upon all flesh, yes, and upon all the works of God to sound forth the praises of the Most High. Will we not heartily respond to the call?

In following out his design of praise, David had spoken in verse five of the majesty of God, the glorious King. His eye seems to be dazzled by the glorious splendor of the august throne and he cries, "I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty." Then he thinks of the power of that throne of majesty and of the force with which its just decrees are carried out and so in verse six he exclaims, "Men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts and I will declare Your greatness." Here he speaks briefly both as to the majesty and the might of the dread Supreme, but when he turns his thoughts to the divine goodness, he enlarges and uses words which indicate the stress which he lays upon his subject and his desire to linger over it. "They shall abundantly utter," says our text, "the memory of Your great goodness." Now, our desire this morning is that we also may praise and magnify the name of the infinite Jehovah without limit and may especially have our hearts enlarged and our mouths opened wide to speak abundantly of His great goodness. O that in the whole of this congregation the text may become true—"They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness"—and having uttered it

in plain speech, may we all rise a stage higher and with gladsome music sing of His righteousness.

You see our objective, an objective in which, I trust, you all sympathize. Come one and all and praise the Lord. Is the invitation too wide? Observe the ninth verse—"The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works. All Your works shall praise You." I will not limit the invitation of the Lord since you all drink of the river of His bounty. Render to Him, all of you, such praises as you can.

But there is a special invitation to His saints. Come and bless His name with spiritual, inward, enlightened praise. "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel. You that fear the Lord, bless the Lord." In your heart of hearts, extol, adore, and make Him great, for it is written—"Your saints shall bless You." Verily this shall not be written in vain, for our souls shall bless the Lord this day as the Holy Spirit shall move within us.

We shall speak upon two things that we may promote the objective we have in view. The first is *the method of securing the abundant utterance of God's praise as to His goodness;* and secondl*y, the motives for desiring to secure this abundant utterance.*

I. THE METHOD OF SECURING THE ABUNDANT UTTERANCE OF THE DIVINE PRAISE CONCERNING HIS GOODNESS. Our text gives us the mental philosophy of abounding praise and shows us the plan by which such praise may be secured. The steps are such as the best mental philosophy approves. First, we shall be helped to abundant praise by careful observation. Notice the text—"They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness." Now, in order to memory, there must first of all be observation. A man does not remember what he never knew. This is clear to all and therefore the point is virtually implied in the text. In proportion as a fact or a truth makes an impression upon the mind, in that proportion is it likely to abide in the memory. If you hear a sermon, that which you remember afterwards is the point which most forcibly strikes you while you are listening to the discourse. At the time you say, "I will jot that down, for I should not like to forget it, for it comes so closely home to me"; and whether you use your pencil or not, memory obeys your wish and makes a record upon her tablets. It is so with the dealings of God towards us. If we want to remember His goodness, we must let it strike us—we must notice it, consider it, meditate upon it, estimate it, and allow it to exert its due influence upon our hearts—then we shall not need to say that "we must try and remember," for we shall remember as a matter of course. The impression being clearly and deeply made will not easily fade away, but we shall see it after many days. The first thing, therefore, towards the plentiful praising of God is a careful observation of His goodness.

Now, see what it is that we are to observe—it is God's goodness. Too many are blind to that blessed object. They receive the bounties of His liberality and are guided by His care, but they attribute all that they receive to themselves or to secondary agents. God is not in all their thoughts and consequently His goodness is not considered. They have no memory of His goodness because they have no observation of it. Some, indeed, instead of observing the goodness of God, complain of His un-

kindness to them and imagine that He is needlessly severe. Like the unprofitable servant in the parable, they say, "I knew You, that You are an austere man." Others sit in judgment upon His ways, as we find them recorded in Holy Scripture and dare to condemn the Judge of all the earth. Denying the goodness of Jehovah, they attempt to set up another god than the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who for this enlightened 19th Century is a God much too sternly just. In this house, however, we worship *Jah,* Jehovah the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—and none other than He. In many a place of worship this day, they adore new gods, newly come up which our fathers knew not—not like the God of the Old Testament, who in the opinion of modern philosophers, is as much out of date as Jupiter himself. This day we say with David, "This God is our God forever and ever." "O come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before Jehovah our Maker. For He is our God and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand." As we find the Lord revealed both in the Old and the New Testament, making no division in the revelation, but regarding it as one grand whole, we behold abundant goodness in Him. Mingled with that awful justice which we would not wish to deny, we see surpassing grace and we delight that God is love. He is gracious and full of compassion. He is slow to anger and of great mercy. We have no complaints to make against Him. We wish to make no alteration in His dealings or in His character. He is our exceeding joy—our whole heart rejoices in the contemplation of Him. "Who is like unto You, O God? Among the gods who is like unto You?" We are, then, to consider what many will not so much as believe—that there is great goodness in Jehovah, the God of creation, providence, and redemption—the God of Paradise, of Sinai, and of Calvary. We are to thoroughly acquaint ourselves with Him as He has made Himself known and we are continually to consider His great goodness, that we may retain the memory of it.

If we are willing to see, we shall not lack for opportunities of beholding His goodness every day, for it is to be seen in so many acts that I will not commence the catalog since I should never complete it. His goodness is seen in creation—it shines in every sunbeam, glitters in every dewdrop, smiles in every flower, and whispers in every breeze. Earth and sea and air, teeming with innumerable forms of life, are all full of the goodness of the Lord. Sun, moon, and stars affirm that the Lord is good and all terrestrial things echo the proclamation. His goodness is also to be seen in the providence which rules over all. Let rebellious spirits murmur as they may, goodness is enthroned in Jehovah's kingdom and evil and suffering are intruders. God is good towards all His creatures and especially towards the objects of His eternal love for whom all things work together for good. It is, however, in the domain of divine grace that the noblest form of divine goodness is seen. Begin with the goodness which shines in our election and follow the silver thread through redemption, the mission of the Holy Spirit, the calling, the adoption, the preservation, the perfecting of the chosen—and you will see riches of goodness which will astound you! Dwell where you may within the kingdom of redemption, and you will see rivers, yes, oceans of goodness. I leave your own minds

to remember these things and your own lips to abundantly utter the memory of the Lord's great goodness in the wonders of His salvation. It is not my design to speak for you, but to stir you up to speak for yourselves.

The point which struck the psalmist and should strike us all is *the greatness* of the goodness. The greatness of the goodness will be seen by the contemplative mind upon a consideration *of the person upon whom the goodness lights*. "Why me?" will often be the utterance of a grateful spirit. That God should be good to any of His people shows His mercy, but that He should make me to be one of His and deal so well with me—here His goodness exceeds itself. Why me? Is this the manner of man, O Lord? What am I and what is my father's house? It is great goodness because it visits persons so insignificant, yes more—so guilty and so deserving of wrath. Blessed be God that He is good to persons so ungrateful—to persons who cannot, even at the best, make any adequate return—who, alas, do not even make such return as they could. Ah, Lord, when I consider what a brutish creature I am, it is easy to confess the greatness of Your goodness.

The greatness of the goodness becomes apparent when we think *of the greatness of God the benefactor*. "What is man that You are mindful of him or the son of man that You visit him?" That God Himself should bless His people. That He should come in the form of human flesh to save His people. That He should dwell in us, walk in us, and be to us a God—a very present help in trouble—is a miracle of love. Is not this great goodness? I can very well understand that the infinity of His benevolence should commit us to the charge of angels, but it is amazing that it should be written, "I the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Oh, the greatness of such personal condescension, such personal care. O heir of heaven, from the fountain of all goodness shall you drink and not only from its streams. God Himself is your portion and the lot of your inheritance. You are not put off with creatures—the Creator Himself is yours. Will you not remember this and so keep alive the memory of His goodness?

The greatness of the goodness is, on some occasions, made manifest by the *evil from which it rescues us*. Nobody knows so well the blessing of health as he who has but lately been tortured in every limb—then for his restoration he blesses Jehovah Rophi, the healing Lord. None know what salvation from sin means like those who have been crushed beneath the burden of guilt and have been racked by remorse. Did you ever feel yourself condemned of God and cast out from His presence? Did the pangs of hell commence within your startled conscience? Did your soul long for death rather than life, while thick clouds and darkness shrouded your guilty spirit? If so, when the Lord has put away your sin and said, "You shall not die," when He has brought you forth from the prison, broken your bonds asunder and set your feet upon a rock, then has the new song been in your mouth, even praise forevermore. Then have you known it to be great goodness which thus delivered you. We may imagine what the bottom of the sea is like and conceive what it must be to be borne down to the lower deeps where the weeds are wrapped about the dead

men's brows, yet I guarantee you that our imagination but poorly realizes what Jonah experienced when the floods compassed him about and he went down to the bottom of the mountains. When the Lord brought his life up from corruption, then he had a strong and vivid memory of the great goodness of God, seeing he had been delivered from so great a death. It is in the storm that we learn. O praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men. If I might have it so, I could wish my whole life to be calm as a fair summer's evening when scarcely a zephyr stirs the happy flowers. I could desire that nothing might again disturb the serenity of my restful spirit—but were it to be so, I suspect I should know but little of the great goodness of the Lord. The sweet singer in the 107th Psalm ascribes the song of gratitude not to dwellers at home, but to wanderers in the wilderness—not to those who are always at liberty, but to emancipated captives—not to the strong and vigorous, but to those who barely escape from the gates of death. Not to those who stand upon a sea of glass, but to those who are tossed in tempests upon a raging ocean. Doubtless so it is—we should not perceive the greatness of goodness if we did not see the depth of the horrible pit from which it snatches us. You were almost ruined in business, friend, but you escaped with the skin of your teeth—then you praised God for His great goodness. Your dear child was given up by the physicians; your wife apparently sickened for death—but both these have been spared to you and herein you see the heights and depths of mercy. Now, therefore, lay up this great goodness in your memory to be the material for future psalms of praise.

Nor is this the only way of estimating God's great goodness—you may estimate it by *the actual greatness of the benefits bestowed*. He gives like a king. No, He gives like a God. Behold, your God has not given you a few minted coins of gold, but he has endowed you with the mines themselves. He has not, as it were, handed you a cup of cold water, but He has brought you to the flowing fountain and made the well itself your own. God Himself is ours. "The Lord is my portion, says my soul." If you must have a little list of what He has given you, ponder the following items—He has given you a name and a place among His people. He has given you the rights and the nature of His children. He has given you the complete forgiveness of all your sins and you have it now. He has given you a robe of righteousness and you are wearing it now. He has given you a superlative loveliness in Christ Jesus and you have it now. He has given you access to Him and prevalence at the Mercy Seat. He has given you this world and worlds to come. He has given you all that He has. He has given you His own Son, and how shall He now refuse you anything? Oh, He has given like a God. The greatness of His goodness this tongue can never hope to tell and so I ask you to think it over in a quiet hour at home. As for myself, I will speak of my Lord as I find Him, for the old proverb bids we do so. Whatever you shall say, brethren, I have nothing to speak but what is good of my God, my King, from my childhood until now. He amazes me with His mercy. He utterly astounds me with His loving-kindness. He causes my spirit to almost swoon away with delight beneath the sweetness of His love. Yet He has not spared me the rod, nor

will He and blessed be His name for that also. "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord and shall we not also receive evil?" said the patriarch, but we will go beyond that and assert that evil is no evil when it comes from His hand. Everything is good which He ordains. We may not see it to be so at the time, but so it is. Our heavenly Father seems to rise from good to better and from better to yet better still in infinite progression. He causes the roadway of our life to rise higher and higher and carries it over lofty mountains of loving-kindness. Our life path winds ever upward to yet higher summits of abounding mercy—therefore let His praise increase and the name of the Lord be greater and greater still.

I want to urge you, dear friends, to observe the goodness of God carefully for your souls' good. There is a great difference between eyes and no eyes—yet many have eyes and see not. God's goodness flows before them and they say, "Where is it?" They breathe it and they say, "Where is it?" They sit at the table and they are fed upon it. They wear it upon their limbs. It is in the very beating of their heart and yet they say, "Where is it?" Be not blind. "The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib"—let us not be cruder than beasts of the field—but let us know the Lord and consider well the greatness of His goodness.

I have said that the text contains the philosophy of great praise and we see this in the second stage of the process, namely, diligent memory. That which has made an impression upon the mind by observation is fastened upon the memory. Memory seems to be in two things—first in retaining an impression and then in recollecting it at a future time. I suppose that, more or less, everything that happens to us is retained in the mind, but it is not easy to reproduce the fainter impressions when you wish to do so. I know in my own mind a great many things that I am sure I remember, but yet I cannot always recollect them immediately. Give me a quarter of an hour to run through a certain arrangement of ideas and I shall say, "Oh yes, I have it. It was in my mind, but I could not recall it at the time." Memory collects facts and afterwards recollects them. The matters before us are recorded by memory, but the tablet may be mislaid—the perfection of memory is to preserve the tablet in a well-known place from which you can fetch it forth in a moment. I have dwelt rather long upon observation with the view that you may begin aright from the beginning and by getting vivid impressions, may be the better able to retain and recall them. We cannot utter what we have forgotten and therefore the use of close observation to make a strong memory touching the Lord's great goodness.

How are we to strengthen our memory as to God's goodness? First, we should be well acquainted with the documents in which His goodness is recorded. A man may be said to keep in memory a fact which did not happen in his own time, but hundreds of years before he was born—he remembers it because he has seen the document in which the fact is recorded. In a certain sense this is within the range of memory—it is within the memory of man, the united memory of the race. Beloved, be familiar with the Word of God. Store your memory with the ancient records of His great goodness. Drink in the whole narrative of the evangelists and despise not Moses and the prophets. Soak in the Psalms and the Song of

Solomon and such books till you come to know the well-recorded goodness of the Lord. Have His words and deeds of goodness arranged and at your fingertips because they are in your heart and then you will be abundantly sure to utter the memory of His goodness, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

Next, if you would strengthen your memory, diligently observe the memorials. There are two in the Christian church. There is the memorial of your Savior's death, burial, and resurrection which is set forth in believers' baptism, wherein we are buried and risen with the Lord Christ. Forget not that memorial of His deep anguish when He was immersed in grief and plunged in agony, for He bids you observe it. And as for the Holy Supper, never neglect it, but be often at the table where again you set forth His death till He comes. He has bid you do this in remembrance of Him—devoutly cherish the precious memorial. Great events in nations have been preserved upon the memory of future generations by some ordained ceremonial and the Lord's Supper is of that kind. Therefore, observe well the table of the Lord that you forget not His great goodness. Look how the Jews kept their Exodus in mind by means of the Paschal Lamb—how they ate it after the sprinkling of the blood—how they talked to their children and told them of the deliverance from Egypt, abundantly uttering the memory of God's goodness and then after supper they sang a hymn, even as our text bids us sing of the righteousness of God. Strengthen your memories then by reverent attention to the historical documents and the memorial ordinances.

Still, the most important is the memory of what has happened to yourself, your own *personal experience.* I will not give a penny for your religion unless it has taken effect upon yourself. The power of prayer! What of that? Did you ever receive an answer to prayer? Did you ever wrestle with the angel and come away victorious? What do you know about prayer if you never prayed? You are very orthodox. Yes, but unless the doctrines of grace have brought to your soul the grace of the doctrines—and you have tasted and handled them—what do you know about them? Nothing certainly to remember. O, dear heart, were you ever born-again? Then you will remember His great goodness. Were you ever cleansed from your sin and justified in Christ? You will remember His great goodness. Have you been renewed in heart so as to hate sin and live in holiness? If so, you will remember because you know something which flesh and blood have not revealed unto you. Let every personal mercy be written upon your personal memory.

I have heard that the science of mnemonics, or the strengthening of the memory, for which I have not a very high esteem, lies in the following of certain methods. According to some, you link one idea with another—you remember a date by associating it with something that you can see. Practice this method in the present case. Remember God's goodness by the objects around you which are associated with it. For instance, let your bed remind you of God's mercy in the night watches and your table of His goodness in supplying your daily needs. My garments, when I put them on this morning, reminded me of times when my hand was unequal even to that simple task. All around us there are memoranda of God's

love if we choose to read them. The memory of some deed of divine goodness may be connected with every piece of furniture in your room. There is the old armchair where you wrestled with God in great trouble and received a gracious answer. You cannot forget it—you do not pray so well anywhere else as you do there—you have become attached to that particular chair. That thumbed Bible, that particular one I mean—it is getting rather worn now and is marked a good deal, but nevertheless, out of that very copy the promises have gleamed forth like the stars in heaven and therefore it helps your memory to use it. I remember a poor man giving me what I thought great praise. I visited him in the hospital and he said, "Ah, you seem to have hung this room round with your texts, for everything reminds me of what I have heard you say, and as I lay here I recollect your stories and your sayings." In much the same way, we should remember what God has done for us by looking at all the various places, circumstances, times, and persons which were the surroundings of His mercy. O for a clear remembrance of the goodness of God.

Memory is sometimes helped by classification. You send a servant to a shop for a variety of articles—she will forget some of them unless you so arrange the order that one suggests another. Take care then to set God's mercies in order before you and reckon them up in number, if you can, and so fix them in your memory.

At other times, when persons have very bad memories, they like to write down on a piece of paper that which is important to remember. I have often done so, and have placed the paper where I have never found it again; a thread around the finger or a knot in a handkerchief and many other devices have been tried. I do not care what it is, so long as you try and remember God's mercy to you by some means or other. Do make some record of His goodness. You know the day in which you lost that money, do you not? "Yes, very well." You remember the day of the month of Black Friday or Black Monday, up in the City. You have evil days indelibly noted in the black pocketbook of memory—do you remember as well the days of God's special loving-kindness to you? You should. Take pains to make notes of notable benefits and to mark remarkable blessings and so you shall in future days utter the memory of God's great goodness.

The first two processes for securing abundant praise are observation and remembrance. The next is utterance "They shall abundantly utter." The word contains the idea of boiling or bubbling up like a fountain. It signifies a holy fluency about the mercy of God. We have quite enough fluent people about, but they are many of them, idlers for whom Satan finds abundant work to do. May the Lord deliver us from the noise of fluent women—but it matters not how fluent men and women are if they will be fluent on the topic now before us. Open your mouths. Let the praises pour forth. Let rivers of it come. Stream away! Gush away all that you possibly can. "They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness." Do not stop the joyful speakers—let them go on forever. They do not exaggerate—they cannot. You say they are enthusiastic, but they are not half up to the pitch yet. Bid them become more excited and speak yet more fervently. Go on, brother, go on. Pile it up. Say something great-

er, grander, and more fiery still! You cannot exceed the truth. You have come to a theme where your most fluent powers will fail in utterance. The text calls for a sacred fluency and I would exhort you to exercise it liberally when you are speaking of the goodness of God.

"They shall abundantly utter it"—that is, they shall constantly be doing it—they shall talk about God's goodness all day long. When you step into their cottages, they will begin to tell you of God's goodness to them. When you bid adieu to them at night, you shall hear more last words upon their favorite theme. Very likely they will repeat themselves, but that does not matter, you cannot have too much of this truly good thing. Just as the singers in the temple repeated again and again the chorus, "His mercy endures forever," so may we repeat our praises. Some of God's mercies are so great and sweet that if we never had another thought throughout eternity, the recollection of the single favor might forever remain. The splendor of divine love is so great that a single manifestation of it is often all that we can bear. To have two such revelations at once would be as overpowering as though God should make two suns when one already fills the world with light. Oh, praise the Lord, my brethren and sisters, with boundless exultation. Awaken all your faculties to this divine service and abundantly utter the memory of His goodness.

You cannot praise abundantly unless your memory supplies materials and on the other hand, your memory will lose strength unless you utter what you know. When you went to school and had a lesson to learn, you found out that by reading your lesson aloud you learned it more quickly, for your ears assisted your eyes. Uttering the divine goodness is a great help to the memory of it. By teaching we learn—by giving the truth expression, we deepen its impression upon our minds.

Now I come to the last part of this admirable process. When we have abundantly uttered, then we are to *sing*. In the old Greek mythology, Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory, is the mother of the Muses and surely where there is a good memory of God's loving-kindness the heart will soon produce a song. But what is surprising in the text is that when the joy is described as mounting from plain utterance to song it takes another theme—"Sing of *Your righteousness*." When the heart is most adoring and selects the grandest theme for reverent song, it chooses the meeting of goodness and righteousness as its topic. How sweet is that canticle—"Mercy and truth are met together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other." The atonement is the gem of the heart's poetry. Do not your hearts burn within you at the very mention of the glorious deed of Jesus, our great Substitute? Parnassus is outdone by Calvary. The Castalian spring is dried and Jesus' wounded side has opened another fountain of song. The goodness of the Lord to us in all the blessings of His providences we gladly chant, but when we tell of the grace which led our Lord Jesus to bleed and die, "the just for the unjust to bring us to God," our music leaps to nobler heights. Incomparable wisdom ordained a way in which God should be righteous to the sternness of severity and yet should be good, illimitable good, to those that put their trust in Him. Lift up then your music till the golden harps shall find themselves outdone.

Thus, we have explained the method of securing an abundant utterance—may the Holy Spirit help us carry it out.

II. In the second place, we shall very briefly note THE MOTIVES FOR THIS ABUNDANT UTTERANCE. These are very near to hand. The first is because we cannot help it. The goodness of God demands that we should speak of it. If the Lord Jesus Himself should charge His people to be silent as to His goodness, they would scarcely be able to obey the command. They would, like the man that was healed, blaze abroad the mighty work that He had done. But bless His name, He has not told us to be quiet—He allows us to abundantly utter the memory of His great goodness. The stones of the street would cry out as we went along if we did not speak of His love. Some of you good people seldom speak of the goodness of God. How is this? I wonder you can be so coldly quiet. "Oh," said one in his first love, "I must speak or I shall burst" and we have sometimes felt the same when the restrained testimony was as fire within our bones. Is it not a sacred instinct to tell out what we feel within? The news is too good to keep. Indulge to the full the holy propensity of your renewed nature. Your soul says, "Speak," and if etiquette says, "Hush, they will think you a fanatic," regard it not, but speak aloud and let them think you are a fanatic if they please. Sir, play the organ very softly when the subject is your own praise, but when you come to the praises of God, pull out all the stops—thunders of music are all too little for His infinite glories.

Another motive for abundantly uttering the praises of God is that other voices are clamorous to drown it. What a noisy world this is with its conflicting and discordant cries. "Lo here," cries one. "Lo there," shouts another; this uproar would drown the notes of God's praise unless His people uttered it again and again and yet again! The more there is said against our God, the more should we speak for Him. Whenever you hear a man curse, it would be wise to say aloud, "Bless the Lord." Say it seven times for every time he curses and make him hear it. Perhaps he will want to know what you are doing and you will then have an opportunity of asking what he is doing—and he will have more difficulty in explaining himself than you will in explaining yourself. Do try, if you can, to make up for the injuries done to the dear and sacred name of God by multiplying your praises in proportion as you hear Him spoken ill of. I say, unless you give forth abundant utterance, God's praise will be buried under heaps of error, blasphemy, ribaldry, nonsense, and idle talk. Abundantly utter it so that some of it at least may be heard.

Praise the Lord abundantly because it will benefit you to do so. How bright the past looks when we begin to praise God for it. We say, "I am the man that has seen affliction," and we are to fill the cup of memory with gall and wormwood—but when we see the goodness of God in it all, we turn the kerchief with which we wiped our tears into a flag of victory—and with holy praise, in the name of our God, we wave the banner.

As for the present, if you think of God's mercies, how different it seems. A man comes to his dinner table and does not enjoy what is there because he misses an expected dainty, but if he were as poor as some people, he would not turn his nose up, but would bless the goodness

which has given him so much more than he deserves. Some I know, even among Christians, are growlers in general always finding fault. The best things in the world are not good enough for them. Ah, my brother, abundantly utter the memory of God's goodness and you will find nothing to grumble about—nothing to complain about—but everything to rejoice in

. As for the future, if we remember God's goodness, how joyfully we shall march into it. There is the same goodness for tomorrow as for yesterday, and the same goodness for old age as for youth—the same God to bless me when I grow grey as when I was a babe upon my mother's breast—therefore, forward to the future without hesitation or suspicion, abundantly uttering the loving-kindness of the Lord.

Again, I think we ought to do this because of the good it does to other people. If you abundantly talk of God's goodness you are sure to benefit your neighbors. Many are comforted when they hear of God's goodness to their friends. Draw a long face and lament the trials of the way—sit down with somber brethren and enjoy a little comfortable misery and see whether crowds will ask to share your vinegar.—

"While here our various wants we mourn,
United groans ascend on high,"

says Dr. Watts and I am afraid he speaks the truth, but very few will be led in this way to resolve—"We will go with these people, for we perceive that God is with them." Is it good reasoning if men say, "These people are so miserable that they must be on the way to heaven"? We may hope they are, for they evidently need some better place to live in, but then it may be questioned if such folks would not be wretched even in heaven. You smile, dear friends, as if you said you would not be much attracted by sanctimonious misery, nor do I think you would. Therefore, do not try it yourselves, but on the contrary, talk much of the goodness of the Lord and wear a smiling face and let your eyes sparkle and go through the world as if after all you are not slaves under the lash or prisoners in bonds, but the Lord's free men. We have glorious reasons for being happy—let us be so and soon we shall hear persons asking, "What is this? Is this religion? I always thought religious people felt bound to be down in the dumps and to go mourning and sighing all their days." When they see your joy they will be tempted to come to Christ. There is a blessed seductiveness in a holy, happy life. Praise then His name. Praise His name forevermore. Abundantly utter the memory of His great goodness and you will bring many to Christ.

Such happy utterance will help also to comfort your own Christian friends and fellow sufferers. There is a deal of misery in the world—just now more than usual. Many are sorrowing from various causes. Therefore, my dear friends be happier than you ever were. That venerable man of God, now in heaven, our dear old father Dransfield, when it was a very foggy morning in November, used to always come into the vestry before the sermon and say, "It is a dreary morning, dear pastor. We must rejoice in the Lord more than usual; things around us are dark, but within and above all is bright. I hope we shall have a very happy service today." He would shake hands with me and smile till he seemed to carry us all into the middle of summer. What if it is bad weather? Bless the Lord that it is

not worse than it is. We are not altogether in Egyptian darkness—the sun does shine now and then—and we are sure it is not blown out. So, when we are sick and ill, let us thank God that we shall not be ill forever, for there is a place where the inhabitants are no more sick. And now today, if your harps have been hanging on the willows, take them down. If you have not praised the Lord as you should, begin to do so. Wash your mouths and get rid of the sour flavor of murmuring about bad trade and bad weather. Sweeten your lips with the pleasant confection of praise. I will tell you this, brethren, if any of you shall confess to me that you have sinned by going too far in blessing God, I will for once become a priest and give you absolution. I never tried my hand at that business before, but I think I can manage as much. Praise God extravagantly if you can. Try it. I wish you would say within yourself, "I will go beyond all bounds in this matter," for there are no bounds to the deserving of an ever-blessed God.

Lastly, let us praise and bless God because it is the way in which He is glorified. We cannot add to His glory, for it is infinite in itself—but we can make it to be more widely known by simply stating the truth about Him. Don't you want to give honor to God? Would you not lay down your life that the whole earth might be filled with His glory? Well, if you cannot cover the earth with His praises as the waters cover the sea, you can at least contribute your portion to the flood. Oh, keep not back your praises, but bless and magnify His name from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. It will lift earth upward and heavenward if we can all unite in praise—we shall see it rising as it were beneath our feet—and ourselves rising with it until we shall stand as upon the top of some loftiest Alp that has pierced the vault of heaven, and we shall be among the angels, feeling as they feel, doing as they do, and losing ourselves as they lose themselves in the eternal hallelujah of, "Glory, and honor, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

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PRAYER PERFUMED WITH PRAISE
NO. 1469

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 20, 1879,
BY C. H, SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."
Philippians 4:6.

ACCORDING to the text we are both by prayer and supplication to make known our requests unto God. If any distinction is intended here, I suppose that by prayer is meant the general act of devotion and the mention of our usual needs and by supplication I think would be intended our distinct entreaties and special petitions. We are to offer the general prayer common to all the saints and we are to add the special and definite petitions which are peculiar to ourselves. We are to worship in prayer, for God is to be adored by all His saints, and then we are to beseech His favors for ourselves according to the words of the text, letting our requests be made known unto God. Do not forget this second form of worship. There is a good deal of generalizing in prayer and God forbid that we should say a word against it, so far as it is sincere worship. But we need to have more of specific, definite pleading with God, asking Him for such-and-such things with a clear knowledge of what we ask. You will hear prayers at prayer meetings in which everything is asked in general but nothing in particular and yet the reality and heartiness of prayer will often be best manifested by the putting up of requests for distinct blessings. See how Abraham, when he went to worship the Lord, did not merely adore Him and in general pray for His glory, but on a special occasion he pleaded concerning the promised heir. At another time he cried, "O that Ishmael might live before You," and on one special occasion he interceded for Sodom. Elijah, when on the top of Carmel, did not pray for all the blessings of providence in general, but for rain, for rain then and there. He knew what he was driving at, kept to his point, and prevailed. So, my beloved friends, we have many needs which are so pressing as to be very distinct and definite and we ought to have just as many clearly defined petitions which we offer to God by way of supplication and for the divine answers to these we are bound to watch with eager expectancy so that when we receive them we may magnify the Lord.

The point to which I would draw your attention is this—whether it is the general prayer or the specific supplication—we are to offer either or both "with thanksgiving." We are to pray about everything and with every prayer we must blend our thanksgivings. Therefore, it follows that we ought always to be in a thankful condition of heart since we are to pray without ceasing and are not to pray without thanksgiving. It is clear that we ought to be always ready to give thanks unto the Lord. We must say with the psalmist, "Thus will I bless You while I live, I will lift up my

hands in Your name." The constant tenor and spirit of our lives should be adoring gratitude, love, reverence, and thanksgiving to the Most High.

This blending of thanks with devotion is always to be maintained. Always must we offer prayer and supplication *with* thanksgiving. No matter though the prayer should struggle upward out of the depths, yet must its wings be silvered over with thanksgiving. Though the prayer were offered upon the verge of death, yet in the last few words which the trembling lips can utter there should be notes of gratitude as well as words of petition. The law says, "With all your sacrifices you shall offer salt," and the gospel says with all your prayers you shall offer praise. "One thing at a time" is said to be a wise proverb, but for once I must venture to contradict it and say that two things at a time are better when the two are prayer and thanksgiving. These two holy streams flow from one common source—the Spirit of life which dwells within us—and they are utterances of the same holy fellowship with God. Therefore, it is right that they should mingle as they flow and find expression in the same holy exercise. Supplication and thanksgiving so naturally run into each other that it would be difficult to keep them separate. Like kindred colors, they shade off into each other. Our very language seems to indicate this, for there is small difference between the words "to pray" and "to praise." A psalm may be either prayer or praise or both and there is yet another form of utterance which is certainly prayer, but is used as praise and is really both. I refer to that joyous Hebrew word which has been imported into all Christian languages, "Hosanna." Is it a prayer? Yes. "Save, Lord." Is it not praise? Yes, for it is tantamount to, "God save the King" and it is used to extol the Son of David. While we are here on earth, we should never attempt to make such a distinction between prayer and praise that we should either praise without prayer or pray without praise—but with every prayer and supplication we should mingle thanksgiving and thus make known our requests unto God.

This commingling of precious things is admirable. It reminds me of that verse in the Canticles where the king is described as coming up from the wilderness in his chariot, "like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant." There is the myrrh of prayer and the frankincense of praise. So too the holy incense of the sanctuary yielded the smoke of prayer which filled the Holy Place, but with it there was the sweet perfume of choice spices which may be compared to praise. Prayer and praise are like the two cherubim on the ark—they must never be separated. In the model of prayer which our Savior has given us, saying, "After this manner pray you," the opening part of it is rather praise than prayer—"Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Your name," and the closing part of it is praise where we say, "For Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen." David, who is the great tutor and exemplar of the church as to her worship, being at once her poet and her preacher, takes care in almost every psalm, though the petition may be agonizing, to mingle exquisite praise. Take, for instance, that psalm of his after his great sin with Bathsheba. There one would think, with sighs and groans and tears so multiplied, he might have almost forgotten or have feared to offer thanksgiving while he was trembling under a sense of wrath. And yet before the psalm that be-

gins, "Have mercy upon me, O God," can come to a conclusion, the psalmist has said, "O Lord, open You my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise," and he cannot pen the last word without beseeching the Lord to build the walls of Jerusalem, adding the promise, "then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar." I need not stop to quote other instances, but it is almost always the case that David by the fire of prayer warms himself into praise. He begins low with many a broken note of complaining, but he mounts and glows and like the lark sings as he ascends. When at first his harp is muffled, he warbles a few mournful notes and becomes excited till he cannot restrain his hand from that well-known and accustomed string which he had reserved alone for the music of praise.

There is a passage in the 18th psalm, at the third verse, in which indeed he seems to have caught the very idea which I need to fix upon your minds this morning—"I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies." He was in such a condition that he says, "The sorrows of death compassed me and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me." Driven by distress, he declares that he will call upon the Lord, that is with utterances of prayer. But he does not only regard his God as the object of prayer, but as one who is to be praised. "I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised" and then as if inspired to inform us of the fact that the blending of thanksgiving with prayer renders it infallibly effectual, as I shall have to show you it does, he adds, "So shall I be saved from my enemies."

Now, if this habit of combining thanksgiving with prayer is found in the Old Testament saints, we have a right to expect it yet more in New Testament believers who in clearer light perceive fresh reasons for thanksgiving. But I shall give you no instance except that of the writer of my text. Does he not tell us in the present chapter that those things which we have seen in him we are to do, for his life was agreeable with his teaching? Now, observe how frequently he commences his epistles with a blending of supplication and thanksgiving. Turn to Romans and note in the first chapter at the eighth and ninth verses, this fusion of the precious metals—"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." There is, "I thank my God" and "I make mention of you always in my prayers." This was not written with a special eye to the precept of our text—it was natural to Paul so to thank God when he prayed. Look at the Epistle to the Colossians, in the first chapter at the third verse, "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you." To the same effect we read in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, chapter one verse two—"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers." Look also at second Timothy, 1:3—"I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of you in my prayers night and day." And if it is so in other epistles, we are not at all surprised to find it so in the

Philippian epistle itself, for so we read when we turn to its first chapter at the third and fourth verses—"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy." Nor need I confine you to the language of Paul's epistle, since it is most noteworthy that in Philippi (and those to whom he wrote must have remembered the incident), Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God at midnight, so that the prisoners heard them. It is clear that Paul habitually practiced what he here enjoins. His own prayers had not been offered without thanksgiving—what God has joined together he had never put asunder.

With this as a preface, I invite you to consider, carefully and prayerfully, first, *the grounds of thanksgiving in prayer;* secondly, *the evil of its absence* and thirdly, *the result of its presence.*

I. First, then, there are REASONS FOR MINGLING THANKSGIVING WITH PRAYER. In the nature of things, it ought to be so. We have abundant cause, my brethren, for thanksgiving at all times. We do not come to God in prayer as if He had left us absolutely penniless and we cried to Him like starving prisoners begging through prison bars. We do not ask as if we had never received a single farthing from God before and hardly thought we should obtain anything now. But on the contrary, having been already the recipients of immense favors, we come to a God who abounds in loving-kindness, who is willing to bestow good gifts upon us and waits to be gracious to us. We do not come to the Lord as slaves to an unfeeling tyrant craving for a gift, but as children who draw near to a loving father, expecting to receive abundantly from his liberal hands. Thanksgiving is the right spirit in which to come before the God who daily loads us with benefits. Think for a while what cause you have for thanksgiving in prayer.

And first you have this, that such a thing as prayer is possible—that a finite creature can speak with the infinite Creator—that a sinful being can have audience with the thrice holy Jehovah. It is worthy of thanksgiving that God should have commanded prayer and encouraged us to draw near unto Him and that moreover He should have supplied all things necessary to the sacred exercise. He has set up a Mercy Seat, sprinkled blood, and He has prepared a High Priest, always living to make intercession. And to these He has added the Holy Spirit to help our infirmities and to teach us what we should pray for as we ought. Everything is ready and God waits for us to inquire at His hands. He has not only set before us an open door and invited us to enter, but He has given us the right spirit with which to approach. The grace of supplication is poured out upon us and worked in us by the Holy Spirit. What a blessing it is that we do not attempt prayer with a "perhaps," as if we were making a doubtful experiment. Nor do we come before God as a forlorn hope, desperately afraid that He will not listen to our cry. But He has ordained prayer to be the ordinary commerce of heaven and earth and sanctioned it in the most solemn manner. Prayer may climb to heaven, for God has Himself prepared the ladder and set it down just by the head of His lonely Jacob so that though that head is pillowed on a stone, it may rest in peace. Lo, at the top of that ladder is the Lord Himself in His covenant

capacity, receiving our petitions and sending His attendant angels with answers to our requests. Shall we not bless God for this?

Let us praise His name, dear friends, especially that you and I are still spared to pray and permitted to pray. What if we are greatly afflicted, yet it is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed. If we had received our just deserts, we should not now have been on praying ground and pleading terms with Him. But let it be for our comfort and to God's praise that we may still stand with bowed head and cry, each one, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Still we may cry like sinking Peter, "Lord save or I perish." Like David, we may be unable to go up to the temple, but we can still go to our God in prayer. The prodigal has lost his substance, but he has not lost his power to supplicate. He has been feeding swine, but as yet he is still a man and has not lost the faculty of desire and entreaty. He may have forgotten his Father, but his Father has not forgotten him. He may arise and he may go to Him and he may pour out his soul in His Father's bosom. Therefore, let us give thanks unto God that He has nowhere said unto us, "Seek you My face in vain." If we find a trembling desire to pray within our soul and if though almost extinct, we feel some hope in the promise of our gracious God—if our heart still groans after holiness and after God though she has lost her power to pray with joyful confidence as once she did—yet let us be thankful that we can pray even if it is but a little. In the will and power to pray there lies the capacity for infinite blessedness—he who has the key of prayer can open heaven—yes, he has access to the heart of God. Therefore, let us bless God for prayer.

And then, beloved, beyond the fact of prayer and our power to exercise it, there is a further ground of thanksgiving in that we have already received great mercy at God's hands. We are not coming to God to ask favors and receive them for the first time in our lives. Why, blessed be His name, if He never granted me another favor, I have enough for which to thank Him as long as I have any being. And this, moreover, is to be remembered—whatever great things we are about to ask, we cannot possibly be seeking for blessings one-half as great as those which we have already received if we are indeed His children. If you are a Christian, you have life in Christ. Are you about to ask for meat and raiment? That life is more than these. You have already obtained Christ Jesus to be yours; then He that spared Him not will deny you nothing. Is there, I was about to say, anything to compare with the infinite riches which are already ours in Christ Jesus? Let us perpetually thank our Benefactor for what we have while we make requests for something more. Should it not be so? Shall not the abundant utterances of the memory of His great goodness run over into our requests till our petitions are baptized in gratitude? While we come before God, in one aspect, empty handed to receive of His goodness, on the other hand we should never appear before Him empty, but come with the fat of our sacrifices offering praise and glorifying God.

Furthermore, there is this to be remembered, that when we come before God in the hour of trouble, remembering His great goodness to us in the past and therefore thanking Him, we ought to have faith enough to believe that the present trouble about which we are praying is sent in

love. You will win with God in prayer if you can look at your trials in this light—"Lord, I have this thorn in the flesh. I beseech You, deliver me from it, but meanwhile I bless You for it, for though I do not understand the why or the wherefore of it, I am persuaded there is Your love within it. Therefore, while I ask You to remove it, so far as it seems evil to me, yet wherein it may to Your better knowledge work my good, I bless You for it and I am content to endure it so long as You see fit." Is not that a sweet way of praying? "Lord, I am in need; be pleased to supply me, but meanwhile, if You do not, I believe it is better for me to be in need, and so I praise You for my necessity while I ask You to supply it. I glory in my infirmity, even while I ask You to overcome it. I triumph before You in my affliction and bless You for it even while I ask You to help me in it and to rescue me out of it." This is a royal way of praying—such a mixture of prayer and thanksgiving is more precious than the gold of Ophir.

Furthermore, beloved, whenever we are on our knees in prayer, it becomes us to bless God that prayer has been answered so many times before. "Here Your poor petitioner bends before You to ask again, but before he asks he thanks You for having heard him so many times before. I know that You always hear me, therefore do I continue to cry to You. My thanksgivings urge me to make fresh petitions, encouraging me in the full confidence that You will not send me away empty." Why, many of the mercies which you possess today and rejoice in are answers to prayer. They are dear to you because, like Samuel whom his mother so named because he was "asked of God," they came to you as answers to your supplications. When mercies come in answer to prayer, they have a double delight about them, not only because they are good in themselves, but because they are certificates of our favor with the Lord. Well, then, as God has heard us so often and we have the proofs of His hearing, should we ever pray with murmurings and complaints? Should we not rather feel an intense delight when we approach the throne of grace—rapture awakened by sunny memories of the past?

Again, we ought to pray with thanksgiving in its highest of all senses by thanking God that we have the mercy which we seek. I wish we could learn this high virtue of faith. When I was conversing lately with our dear friend George Muller, he frequently astonished me with the way in which he mentioned that he had for so many months and years asked for such-and-such a mercy and praised the Lord for it. He praised the Lord for it as though he had actually obtained it. Even in praying for the conversion of a person, as soon as he had begun to intercede, he began also to praise God for the conversion of that person. Though I think he told us he had in one instance already prayed for 30 years and the work was not yet done, yet all the while he had gone on thanking God because he knew the prayer would be answered. He believed that he had his petition and commenced to magnify the Giver of it. Is this unreasonable? How often do we antedate our gratitude among the sons of men! If you were to promise some poor person that you would pay his rent when it came due, he would thank you directly, though not a farthing had left your pocket. We have enough faith in our fellow men to thank them beforehand—surely we may do the same with our Lord. Shall we not be willing to trust God for a few months ahead? Ay, and for years beforehand if His

wisdom bids us wait. This is the way to win with Him. When you pray, believe that you receive the gifts you ask and you shall have them. "Believe that you have it," says the Scripture, "and you shall have it." As a man's note of hand stands for the money, so let God's promise be accounted as the performance. Shall not heaven's bank notes pass as cash? Yes, verily, they shall have unquestioned currency among believers. We will bless the Lord for giving us what we have sought, since our having it is a matter of absolute certainty. We shall never thank God in faith and then find that we were fooled—He has said, "All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing you shall receive." And therefore we may rest assured that the thanksgiving of faith shall never bring shame into the face of the man who offers it.

Once again, and then I will say no more upon these grounds of thanksgiving. Surely, brethren, if the Lord does not answer the prayer which we are offering, yet still He is so good, so supremely good, that we will bless Him whether or no. We ought even to praise Him when He does not answer us, yes, and bless Him for refusing our desires. How devoutly might some of us thank Him that He did not answer our prayers when we sought for evil things in the ignorance of our childish minds. We asked for flesh and He might have sent us quails in His anger—and while the flesh was yet in our mouths His wrath might have come upon us—but in love He would not hear us. Blessed be His name for closing His ear in pity! Let us adore Him when He keeps us waiting at His doors. Let us thank Him for rebuffs and bless Him for refusals, believing always that Ralph Erskine spoke the truth when he said—

"I'm heard when answered soon or late,
Yes, heard when I no answer get.
Yes, kindly answered when refused,
And treated well when harshly used."

Faith glorifies the love of God, for she knows that the Lord's roughest usage is only love in disguise. We are not so sordid as to make our songs depend upon the weather or on the fullness of the olive press and the wine vat. Blessed be His name, He must be right even when He seems at cross purposes with His people. We are not going to quarrel with Him like silly babes with their nurses because He does not happen to grant us every desire of our foolish hearts. Though He slays us, we will trust in Him, much more if He declines our requests. We ask Him for our daily bread and if He withholds it, we will praise Him. Our praises are not suspended upon His answers to our prayers. If the labor of the olive should fail and the field should yield no fruit, if the flocks should be cut off from the fold and the herd from the stall, yet still would we rejoice in the Lord and joy in the God of our salvation. Blessed Spirit, raise us to this state of grace and keep us there.

Of that which we have spoken this is the sum—under every condition and in every necessity, draw near to God in prayer, but always bring thanksgiving with you. As Joseph said to his brothers, "You shall not see my face unless your younger brother is with you," so may the Lord say to you, "You shall not receive My smile unless you bring thankfulness with you." Let your prayers be like those ancient prayers which one sometimes sees in which the initial letters of the prayers are gilded and

adorned with a profusion of colors, the work of cunning writers. Let even the general confession of sin and the litany of mournful petitions have at least one illuminated letter. Illuminate your prayers. Light them up with rays of thanksgiving all the way through, and when you come together to pray, forget not to make melody unto the Lord with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

II. Secondly, I shall drive at the same point while I try to show THE EVIL OF THE ABSENCE OF THANKSGIVING in our prayers.

First and foremost we would be chargeable with ingratitude. Are we to be always receiving and never to return thanks? Aristotle rightly observes, "A return is required to preserve friendship between two persons," and as we have nothing else to give to God except gratitude, let us abound in it. If we have no fruit of the field, let us at least render to Him the fruit of our lips. Have you no thanks to bring? How, then, can you expect further favors? Does not liberality itself close its hand when ingratitude stands in the way? What, never a word of gratitude to Him from whom all blessings flow! Then may even the ungodly despise you.

Next, it would argue great selfishness if we did not combine praise with prayer. Can it be right to think only of ourselves—to pray for benefits and never honor our Benefactor? Are we going to import the detestable vice of avarice into spiritual things and only care for our own soul's good? What? No thought for God's glory! No idea of magnifying His great and blessed name! God forbid that we should fall into a spirit so mean and narrow. Healthy praise and thanksgiving must be cultivated because they prevent prayer from becoming overgrown with the mildew of selfishness.

Thanksgiving also prevents prayer from becoming an exhibition of the lack of faith, for indeed some prayer is rather a manifestation of the absence of faith than the exercise of confidence in God. If when I am in trouble I still bless the Lord for all I suffer, my faith is seen. If before I obtain the mercy, I thank God for the grace which I have not yet tasted, my faith is manifest. What? Is our faith such that it only sings in the sunshine? Have we no nightingale music for our God? Is our trust like the swallow which must leave us in winter? Is our faith a flower which needs the conservatory to keep it alive? Can it not blossom like the flower at the foot of the frozen glacier where the damp and chill of adversity surround it? I trust it can. It ought to do so and we ought to feel that we can praise and bless God when outward circumstances appear rather to demand sighs than songs.

Not to thank God in our prayers would argue willfulness and lack of submission to His will. Must everything be ordered according to our mind? To refuse to praise unless we have our own way is great presumption and shows that like a naughty child we will sulk if we cannot be master. I might illustrate the willfulness of many a supplication by that of a little boy who was very diligent in saying his prayers, but was at the same time disobedient, ill-tempered, and the pest of the house. His mother told him that she thought it was mere hypocrisy for him to pretend to pray. He replied, "No, Mother, indeed it is not, for I pray God to lead you and Father to like my ways better than you do." Numbers of people want the Lord to like their ways better, but they do not intend to

follow the ways of the Lord. Their minds are contrary to God and will not submit to His will and therefore there is no thanksgiving in them. Praise in a prayer is indicative of a humble, submissive, obedient spirit—and when it is absent, we may suspect willfulness and self-seeking. Very much of the prayer of rebellious hearts is the mere growling of an angry obstinacy, the whine of an ungratified self-conceit. God must do this and He must do that or else we will not love Him. What baby talk! What spoiled children such are! A little whipping will do them good. "I have never believed in the goodness of God," said one, "ever since He took my dear mother away." I knew a good man whose child was on the verge of the grave. When I went to see her, he charged me not to mention death to her, "For," he said, "I do not believe God could do such an unkind action as take my only child away." When I assured him that she would surely die within a few days and that he must not quarrel with the will of the Lord, he stood firm in his rebellion. He prayed, but he could not bless God and it was no marvel that his heart sank within him and he refused to be comforted when at last his child died, as we all felt sure she would. He became afterwards resigned, but his lack of acquiescence cost him many a smart. This will not do. This quarrelling with God is poor work! Resignation comes to the heart like an angel unawares and when we entertain it, our soul is comforted. We may ask for the child's life, but we must also thank the Lord that the dear life has been prolonged so long as it has been—and we must put the child and everything else into our Father's hands and say—"If You should take all away, yet still will I bless Your name, O Most High." This is acceptable prayer because it is not soured by the leaven of self-will, but salted with thankfulness.

We must mingle our thanksgivings with our prayers or else we may fear that our mind is not in harmony with the divine will. Remember, dear friends that prayer does not alter the mind of God—it never was the intent of prayer that it should attempt anything of the kind! Prayer is the shadow of the decrees of the Eternal. God has willed such a thing and He makes His saints to will it and express their will in prayer. Prayer is the rustling of the wings of the angels who are bringing the blessing to us. It is written, "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desire of your heart." It is not said that He will give the desire of their heart to every Tom, Dick, and Harry, but you must first delight in the Lord, and when your mind finds all her joy in God, then it is clear that God and you, as far as it can be, are standing on the same plane and moving in the same direction—and now you shall have the desire of your heart because the desire of your heart is the desire of God's heart.

Character as much as faith lies at the basis of prevalence in prayer. I do not mean in the case of the prayer of the sinner when he is seeking mercy, but I mean in the habitual prayers of the godly. There are some men who cannot pray so as to prevail, for sin has made them weak and God walks contrary to them because they walk contrary to Him. He who has lost the light of God's countenance has also lost much of the prevalence of his prayers. You do not suppose that every Israelite could have gone to the top of Carmel and opened the windows of heaven as Elijah did. No, he must first be Elijah, for it is the effectual, fervent prayer, not of every man, but of a righteous man, that avails much. And when the

Lord has put your heart and my heart into an agreement with Him, then we shall pray and prevail. What did our Lord say—"If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you." Doubtless many lose power in prayer because their lives are grievous in the sight of the Lord and He cannot smile upon them. Will any father listen to the requests of a child who has set himself up in opposition to parental authority? The obedient, tender, loving child who would not wish for anything which you did not think right to give is he whose requests you are pleased to consider and fulfill. Yes, more—you even anticipate the wishes of such a child and before he calls, you answer him. May we be such children of the great God.

III. And now, in the third place, let us consider THE RESULT OF THE PRESENCE OF THIS THANKSGIVING IN CONNECTION WITH PRAYER. According to the context, the presence of thanksgiving in the heart, together with prayer, is productive of peace. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Now that peace, that conscious calm, that divine serenity which is described as the peace of God is not produced by prayer alone, but by prayer with thanksgiving. Some men pray and they do well. But for lack of mixing thanksgiving with it, their prayer agitates them and they come away from the closet even more anxious than when they entered it. If they mingled in their petitions that sweet powder of the merchants which is called praise and mixed it after the art of the apothecary, in due proportions, the blessing of God would come with it causing repose of heart. If we bless our gracious Lord for the very trouble we pray against. If we bless Him for the very mercy which we need, as though it had already come, if we resolve to praise Him whether we receive the gift or not—learning in whatever state we are to be content, then, "the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus." Brethren, as you value this divine rest of spirit—as you prize constant serenity of soul—I beseech you mingle praises with your prayers.

The next effect of it will be this—the thanksgiving will often warm the soul and enable it to pray. I believe it is the experience of many who love secret devotion that at times they cannot pray, for their heart seems hard, cold, dumb, and almost dead. Do not pump up unwilling and formal prayer, my brethren, but rather take down the hymnbook and sing. While you praise the Lord for what you have, you will find your rocky heart begin to dissolve and flow in rivers. You will be encouraged to plead with the Lord because you will remember what you have before received at His hands. If you had an empty wagon to raise to the mouth of a coal pit, it might be a very difficult task for you—but the work is managed easily by the common sense of the miners. They make the full wagons, as they run down, pull the empty wagons up the incline. Now, when your heart is loaded with praise for mercy received, let it run down the incline and draw up the empty wagon of your desires and you will thus find it easy to pray. Cold and chill prayers are always to be deplored and if by so simple a method as entreating the Lord to accept our thanksgiving,

our hearts can be warmed and renewed, let us by all means take care to use it.

Lastly, I believe that when a man begins to pray with thanksgiving he is upon the eve of receiving the blessing. God's time to bless you has come when you begin to praise Him as well as pray to Him. God has His set time to favor us and He will not grant us our desire until the due season has arrived. But the time has come when you begin to bless the Lord. Now, take an instance of this in the second book of Chronicles, 20th chapter and 20th verse. Jehoshaphat went out to fight with an exceedingly great army and mark how he achieved the victory. "They rose early in the morning and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and you inhabitants of Jerusalem; believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe His prophets, so shall you prosper. And when he had consulted with the people he appointed"—what? Warriors? Captains? No, that was all done, but he "appointed singers unto the Lord, that they should praise the beauty of holiness as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for His mercy endures forever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushes against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten." Victory came when they began to sing and to praise. You shall get your answers to prayer when you multiply your thanksgivings in all your prayers and supplications—rest you sure of that.

Our thanksgiving will show that the reason for our waiting is now exhausted—that the waiting has answered its purpose and may now come to a joyful end. Sometimes we are not in a fit state to receive a blessing, but when we reach the condition of thankfulness, then is the time when it is safe for God to indulge us. A professing Christian came to his minister once and said, "Sir, you say we should always pray." "Yes, my friend, undoubtedly." "But then, sir, I have been praying for 12 months that I might enjoy the comforts of religion and I am no happier than before. I have made that my one perpetual prayer—that I might enjoy the comforts of religion—but I do not feel joy nor even peace of mind. In fact, I have more doubts and fears than I ever had." "Yes," said his minister, "and that is the natural result of such a selfish prayer. Why, dear friend," he said, "come and kneel down with me and let us pray in another manner. Father, glorify Your name. Your kingdom come. Now," he said, "go and offer those petitions and get to work to try to make it true and see if you do not soon enjoy the comforts of religion." There is a great deal in that fact—if you will but desire God to be glorified and aim at glorifying Him yourself—then shall the joys of true godliness come to you in answer to prayer.

The time for the blessing is when you begin to praise God for it. For, brethren, you may be sure that when you put up a thanksgiving on the ground that God has answered your prayer, you really have prevailed with God. Suppose you had promised to some poor woman that you would give her a meal tomorrow? You might forget it, you know. But suppose when the morning came she sent her little girl with a basket for it? I think she would be likely to get it. But suppose that she sent, in ad-

dition, a little note in which the poor soul thanked you for your great kindness? Would you have the heart to say, "My dear girl, I cannot attend to you today. Come another time"? Oh dear no, if the cupboard were bare you would send out to get something because the good soul so believed in you that she had sent you thanks for it before she received your gift. Well, now, trust the Lord in the same manner. He cannot run back from His word, my brethren. Believing prayer holds Him, but believing thanksgiving binds Him. If it is not in your own heart, though you are evil, to refuse to give what you have promised when that promise is so believed that the person rejoices as though he had it—then depend upon it—the good God will not find it in His heart to refuse you. The time for reception is fully come because thanksgiving for that reception fills your heart. I leave the matter with you. If you are enabled to pray in that fashion, great good will come to yourselves, to the church of God, and to the world at large by such prayers.

Now, I think I hear in this audience someone saying, "But I cannot pray so. I do not know how to pray. Oh, that I knew how to pray! I am a poor, guilty sinner. I cannot mix any thanksgiving with my supplications." Ah, my dear soul, do not think about that just now. I am not so much preaching to you as I am preaching to the people of God. For you, it is quite enough to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And yet I will venture to say that there is praise in such a petition. You are implicitly praising the justice of God and you are praising His mercy by appealing to Him. When the prodigal returned and he began his prayer by saying, "I am not worthy to be called your son," there was in that confession a real praise of the father's goodness, of which he was unworthy to partake. But you need not think about this matter at present, for just you have to find Jesus and eternal life in Him. Go and plead the merit of Jesus and cast yourself upon the love and mercy of God in Him and He will not cast you away. And then another day, when you have found and known Him, take care that the thanksgiving for your salvation never ceases. Even when you are most hungry and poor and needy in the future, continue to bless your saving Lord, and say, "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him. And because the Lord inclined His ear unto me I will praise His name as long as I live." God bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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A QUESTION FOR HARD-HEARTED HEARERS
NO. 1470

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

"Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plow there with oxen?"
Amos 6:12.

THESE expressions are proverbs, probably taken from the familiar adages of the country, but, anyhow, right worthy to be used as proverbs. The wiser men become, the more sententious are their utterances, the more terse and full of meaning are their sayings, and therefore the wisdom of the wise condenses into proverbs and the language of prophets is sure to abound in them. But a proverb is generally a sword with two edges or if such a metaphor might be tolerated, it has many edges or is all edge and hence it may be turned this way and that way and its back stroke will be as sharp as its direct cut, for every part of it will have force and point. A proverb has often many bearings, and you cannot always tell what was the precise meaning of him who uttered it, except by the connection. Now, I believe that the connection would abundantly tolerate two senses in this place. An ancient commentator asserts that there are seven meanings of it and that any one of them would be consistent with the context. I cannot deny the assertion, for if it is correct, it is only one among many instances of the manifold wisdom of the Word of God. Like those curious carved Chinese balls in which there is one ball within another, so in many a holy text there is sense within sense, teaching within teaching, and each one worthy of the Spirit of God.

The first sense of the text I would say just a word or two upon is this—the prophet is expostulating with ungodly men upon their pursuit of happiness where it can never be found. They were endeavoring to grow rich and great and strong by oppression. The prophet says, "You have turned judgment into gall and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock." They had transformed the judgment seat into a place where justice was bought and sold and the book of the law was made to be the instrument of chicanery and high-handed fraud. "Yet," says the prophet, "there is no gain to be gotten this way—no real profit, no true happiness. As well may horses run upon the rock and oxen plow the sand—it is a foolish attempt, it is labor in vain." And truly, dear hearers, if there are any of you, and probably there are, who try to content yourselves with this world and hope to find a heaven in the midst of your business and your family without looking upward for it, you labor in vain. If any of you endeavor to find pleasure in sin and think that it will go well with you if you despise the law of God and seek your own pleasure by breaking the natural laws

which concern your body, you will find that you have made a great mistake. You might as well seek for roses in the grottoes of the sea or look for pearls on the bare pavements of the city. You will find what your soul requires nowhere but in God. To seek after happiness in evil deeds is to plow a rock of granite. To labor after true prosperity by dishonest means is as useless as to till the sandy shore.

"Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not?" Young man, you are killing yourself with ambition and if your objective were worthy, we might not be so grieved, but your ambition is selfish—you seek only your own honor and profit—and this is a poor, poor objective for an immortal soul. And you too, sir, are wearing out your life with anxiety—your mind and body both fail you in endeavoring to amass riches, as if a man's life consisted in the abundance of the things which he possesses. You are plowing a rock. Your avarice will not bring you joy of heart or content of spirit, but will end in failure. And you too who labor to weave a righteousness by your works apart from Christ and fancy that with the diligent use of outward ceremonies you may be able to do the work of the Holy Spirit upon your own heart—you too are plowing thankless sand. No harvest will ever repay your self-elected toils. Merit can no more spring from human hands than fruit from an iron rod. The strength of fallen nature exerted at its utmost can never rescue a soul from the storm of wrath which awaits the guilty. You may row hard to bring that galley of yours to shore, but it shall be broken by the fierce storm. Why, then, attempt the impossible when faith would in a moment calm the sea and bring the ship to shore? Woe unto those who kindle a fire, surround themselves with sparks, and delight themselves in the blaze of their own kindling, for they shall have this of the Lord—they shall go down in sorrow.

So far, I believe, I have not misread the text, but have mentioned a very probable meaning of the words as they stand in the context. But still, another strikes me which I think equally suitable and upon it I shall dwell, by God's help.

It is just this. God will not always send His prophets to warn people, or employ His ministers to call them to repentance. When it turns out that men's hearts remain unyielding and they do not and will not repent, then God will not always deal with them in mercy. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." There is a time of plowing, but when it comes to be quite evident that the heart is willfully hardened, then wisdom itself suggests to mercy that she should give over her efforts. "Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plow there with oxen?" No, there is a limit to the efforts of kindness and in fullness of time the labor ceases—the rock remains a sterile rock, unplowed henceforth and forever.

I. Taking that sense, we shall speak upon it and remark, first, that MINISTERS LABOR TO BREAK UP MEN'S HEARTS. This is the first effort of the wise preacher. The servant of Christ who teaches the gospel, whatever he may be called, is a sower of seed—and though it may appear useless to sow seed upon rocks, we are bound, while acting as evangelists,

to sow our seed everywhere. Broadcast is our Master's rule—"Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Hence, in our Lord's parable a handful fell upon the highway where the birds devoured it and another handful fell upon the rocky soil where it sprung up, but tomorrow perished because it had not depth of earth. It was no business of the sower to select the soil. He was to sow as he went along, for so his Master told him. But I think he would not be blamed, but commended if he threw double handfuls over there where the soil was evidently rich and well prepared. As a sower, he was to sow broadcast and leave the seed to fall where it might under the guardian care of Him who sent Him to sow. But when he became a farmer, he would have further duties and among the rest, that of breaking up the fallow ground that he might no longer sow among thorns. We have so often sown on the rock and have been so frequently disappointed because of the hardness of the unrenewed heart, that much time must be spent by the pastor, as a lover of men's souls, in trying by the power of the Holy Spirit to break up the hard earth—to make it so that it will be receptive of the seed and ready to nurture the living grain after it has fallen there.

There are many truths which are used in this plowing and driven in like sharp plowshares to break up the heart. Men must be made to feel that they have sinned and they must be led to repent of sin. They must receive Christ, not with the head only, but with the heart—for with the heart man believes unto righteousness. There must be emotion—we must cut into the heart with the plowshare of the law. A farmer who is too tenderhearted to tear up and harrow the land will never see a harvest. Here is the failing of certain divines—they are afraid of hurting anyone's feelings and so they keep clear of all the truths which are likely to excite fear or grief. They have not a sharp plowshare on their premises and are never likely to have a stack in their barn. They angle without hooks for fear of hurting the fish and fire without bullets out of respect to the feelings of the birds. This kind of love is real cruelty to men's souls. It is much the same as if a surgeon should permit a patient to die because he would not pain him with the knife or by the necessary removal of a limb. It is a terrible tenderness which leaves men to sink into hell rather than distress their minds. It is a diabolical love which denies the eternal danger which assuredly exists and argues the soul into presumption because it thinks it a pity to excite terror and so much more pleasant to prophesy smooth things. Is this the spirit of Christ? Did He conceal the sinner's peril? Did He cast doubts upon the unquenchable fire and the undying worm? Did He lull souls into slumber by notes of flattery? No, but with honest love and anxious concern He warned men of the wrath to come and bade them repent or perish. Let the servant of the Lord Jesus in this thing follow his Master and plow deep with a sharp plowshare which will not be balked by the hardest clods. This we must school ourselves to do. It may be contrary to our impulses and painful to our feelings, but it must not be left undone to gratify our love of ease and our desire to please our hearers. If we really love the souls of men, let us

prove it by honest speech which costs us pain, by earnest warning which it is more grievous to us to utter than to others to hear. This part of our work is essential to man's welfare and can by no means be omitted. The hard heart must be broken or it will refuse the Savior whose glory lies very much in His being sent to bind up the broken-hearted. There are some things which men may or may not have and yet may be saved—but those things which go with the plowing of the heart are indispensable and therefore men must have them or hopelessly perish. The heart must be broken up—there must be a holy fear and a humble trembling before God. There must be an acknowledgment of offenses committed and a penitent petition for mercy. There must, in a word, be a thorough plowing of the soul before we can expect that the seed should bring forth fruit.

II. But the text indicates to us that AT TIMES MINISTERS LABOR IN VAIN. "Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plow there with oxen?" There are some hearts—there are some in this house tonight, there are some who are always here—who are very hard soil. When the plowman plows, he soon discovers what he is at work upon. I do not suppose that anybody but a minister with considerable experience will understand what I say when I declare that there is a sympathy between the preacher of the gospel and his hearers of a very intimate kind, even as there is a mutual action between the soil and the plowman. Though our hearers are silent, they probably speak more to the preacher than he does to them. In a short time, a plowman feels whether the plow will go or not and so does the minister. He may use the very same words in one place which he has used in another, or they may seem to him to be so, but he feels in the one place great joy and hopefulness in preaching, while with another audience he has heavy work and little hope mingles with it. The plow in the last case seems to jump out of the furrow—and a bit of the blade is broken off every now and then. He says to himself, "I do not know how it is, but I know I can't get on at this," and he becomes conscious that his Master has sent him to work upon a particularly heavy soil. The people were so far attentive that nobody was asleep—they seemed to drink in every word and yet they were as unmoved as so many statues. They did not feel and did not appear as if they could feel anything. The preacher was ready to stop and burst into tears to see how utterly unfeeling his audience had become, but that did not alter them. He hoped it was no vain regard for his own reputation which distressed him, but that a sincere desire for their good and for the honor of the truth moved him to holy jealousy. But he felt a kind of heart-breaking coming over him because he could make no headway. He was doing his best. The very same that he had done in other places with abounding success and with a sense of joyous ease, he was now doing in heaviness of spirit, conscious that he was wasting effort and that his pleadings were lost upon the people. All laborers for Christ know that this is occasionally the case. You must have found it so in a Sunday school class. You must have known it to be so in a cottage meeting or in any other gathering where

you have tried to teach and preach Jesus. You have said to yourself every now and then, "Now I am plowing a rock. Before, I turned up rich soil which a yoke of oxen might plow with ease and a horse might even run at the work. But now the horse may tug and the oxen may wearily toil till they gall their shoulders—but they cannot cut a furrow—the rock is stubborn to the last degree."

There are such hearers in all congregations. They are as iron and yet they are side by side with a fine plot of ground. Their sister, their brother, their son, their daughter—all these have readily felt the power of the gospel, but *they* do not feel it. They hear it, respectfully hear it and they allow it free course so far that they permit it to go in one ear and out the other, but they will have nothing more to do with it. They would not like to be Sabbath-breakers and stay away from worship. They, therefore, do the gospel the questionable compliment of coming where it is preached and then refusing to regard it. They are hard, hard, hard bits of rock—the plow does not furrow them.

Many, on the other hand, are equally hard, but it is in another way. The plow seems to touch them when they hear the Word of God preached, but it is in seeming only—the impression is not deep or permanent. They receive it with joy, but retain it not. They listen, apparently with deep attention and they are ready enough to go to a place of worship, as often as ever you like, but it never comes to practice with them. They will hear about repentance, but they never repent. They hear about faith, but they never believe. If we were to preach anything other than the truth, they would be indignant, for they are very good judges of what the gospel is—but they have never accepted the gospel. They will not eat, but still they insist that good bread shall be put on the table. They will not wash, but they will have the bath continually open before them. They are great sticklers for the very things which they personally reject. They are moved to feeling—they shed tears occasionally. A sentimental tale would make them weep fast enough and sometimes the pathos of the preacher stirs them in the same manner for a time, but their hearts are not really broken up by the Word. They go their way and forget what manner of men they are. Their transient feeling is rather an illustration of their hardness than an instance of true emotion. They are hard, hard, hard, rocky-hearted through and through. They are stony-souled enough to mock the Word by feeling and yet not feeling—by the imitation of a sensibility which never amounts to spiritual sensation. We have such in this congregation—the Lord have mercy upon them. While I am speaking, I hope the description will come home to them and that each one of them may listen for himself and feel the plowshare tearing its rough but useful way.

Now, all this is the worse because certain of these people, these rocky-hearted people, have been plowed for years and they become harder instead of softer. Once or twice plowing, and a broken share or two, and a disappointed plowman or two, we might not mind if they would yield at last—but these have since their childhood known the gospel and never

given way before its power. It is a good while since their childhood now with some of them. Their hair is turning grey and they are getting feeble with years. I am addressing those who have heard the Word preached in sincerity and earnestness now scores and hundreds of times. You have heard wagonloads of sermons. You have been entreated and persuaded times beyond number. You have had invitations and expostulations multiplied ad infinitum. Yes, and you have been prayed over and wept over, but your hearts are still rocky—labor has been lost upon you. In fact, you used to feel the Word, in a certain fashion, far more years ago than you do now. The sun, which softens wax, hardens clay—and the same gospel which has brought others to tenderness and repentance has exercised a contrary effect upon you and made you more thoughtless, more hardened, more worldly, and more contemptuous of divine things than you were in your youth. We knew it would be so—we told you so years ago—for though we are always unto God a sweet savor, we are among men a savor of death unto death as well as of life unto life. I fear that this sad result is being illustrated in your case.

Why are certain men so extremely rocky? Some are so from a peculiar unemotional nature. There are many people in the world whom you cannot very well move. You would have to put a piece of dynamite under them before you could alarm them much, they are so very quiet and cool about everything. They are the same in business—there is nothing sanguine about them, no excitability, no possibility of stir or emotion. They have a great deal of granite in their constitution and are more nearly related to Mr. Obstinate than to Mr. Pliable. Now, I do not think very badly of these people, because one knows what it is to preach to an excitable people and to get them all stirred up and to know that at the end they are none the better, but relapse into inaction, whereas some of the more unemotional and immovable people, when they are moved, are moved indeed. When they feel, they feel intensely and they retain any impression that is made. A little chip made in granite by very hard blows will abide there, while the lashing of water, which is easy enough, will leave no trace even for a moment. It is a grand thing to get hold of a fine piece of rock and to exercise faith about it. The Lord's own hammer has mighty power to break and in the breaking, great glory comes to the Most High.

Worse still, certain men are hard because of their infidelity—not heart-infidelity all of it—but an infidelity which springs out of a desire not to believe which has assisted itself by manufacturing doubts and discovering difficulties, which difficulties exist and were meant to exist, for there were no room for faith if everything were as plain as the nose on one's face. These people have gradually come to doubt or to think that they doubt essential truths and this renders them impervious to the gospel of Christ—another sad means of hardening the heart till it rivals granite.

A much more numerous body are very orthodox people, but very hard-hearted people for all that. Worldliness hardens a man in every way. It often dries up all his charity to the poor because he must make money and he thinks that the poor *societies* are quite sufficient excuses

for neglecting the offices of charity. He thinks how comfortable poor people are when they are attended to by relieving officers! He pretends to believe that our union houses are perfectly palatial establishments and that it would be wicked to give away a penny because he might be helping an imposter and encouraging idleness. At any rate, it is better for him to take care of his worthy self and give the penny to number one! Worldliness hardens him in that way and so it does with regard to other things. He has no time to think of the next world—he must spend all his thoughts upon the present one. Money is tight and therefore he must hold it tight and when money brings in so little interest, he finds another reason for being the more niggardly. He has no opportunity for prayer—he must get down to the counting house. He has no time for reading his Bible—his ledger needs him. It is of no use to speak to him about eternal things, for he is thoroughly engrossed with the affairs of time. You may knock at his door, but his heart is not at home—it is never at home—it is always in the counting house where he lives and moves and has his being. His god is his gold; his bliss is his business; his all in all is himself. What is the use of preaching to him? As well may horses run upon a rock or oxen drag the plow across a field sheeted with iron a mile thick.

With some too there is a hardness produced by what I might almost call the opposite of stern worldliness, namely, a general levity. Some are naturally butterflies—they never think or want to think. Half a thought exhausts them and they must be diverted or their feeble minds will utterly weary. They live in a round of pleasure and amusement. Their chief delight is giggling—it does not amount to laughter, for it is downright earnest men that laugh—these are too silly, too frivolous for anything but mere childish giggling. They go through the world as if it were a stage and all the men and women only players. It is very little use preaching to them—there is no depth of earth in their superficial nature. Beneath a sprinkling of shifting, worthless sand lies an impenetrable rock of utter stupidity and senselessness. I might thus multiply reasons why some are harder than others, but it is a well-assured fact that they are so and there I leave it to notice a third point.

III. I shall now ask everybody to judge whether this running of horses upon a rock and this plowing there with oxen shall always be continued? I assert that IT IS UNREASONABLE TO EXPECT THAT GOD'S SERVANTS SHOULD ALWAYS CONTINUE TO LABOR IN VAIN.

These people have been preached to, taught, instructed, admonished, expostulated with, and advised—shall this unrecompensed work be always performed? We have given them a fair trial—what do reason and prudence say? Shall we be bound to continue till we are worn out by this unsuccessful work? We will ask it of men of business. We will ask it of men who plow their own farms—do they recommend perseverance when failure is certain? Shall horses run upon the rock? Shall one plow there with oxen? Surely not forever.

I think we shall all agree that labor in vain cannot be continued forever if we, first of all, think of *the plowman*. He is not much and he does

not want to be much considered, but still his Master will think of him. See how weary he grows when the work discourages him. He goes to his Master with, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Why have You sent me," he asks, "to a people that have ears but hear not? They sit as Your people sit and they hear as Your people hear—and then they go their way and they forget every word that is spoken—and they obey not the voice of the Lord by His servant." See how disappointed the preacher becomes. It is always hard work when you appear to see no progress although you do your utmost. Nobody likes doing work which will not pay and from which nothing comes. I once looked over a military prison and I saw the soldiers carrying shot from one end of a yard to the other. And it was remarked to me by the warden that some time ago they made the men pile the shot at one end in a pyramid and then take it back to the other end of the yard and pile it there. But as that gave them some kind of amusement, the work was not thought sufficiently irksome and so they made the culprits carry a shot to one end of the yard and bring it back and thus no pile was formed at either end. The growing of the little pyramid, though they knew they would have to move it again, afforded a measure of interest to the prisoners and as the work was to be a matter of punishment and not of interest, even that was denied them. How frequently we have felt like those poor soldiers in prison, for we have carried the gospel and brought it back again, seeing no result to our endeavors. With many of you, our work has been all wasted, all useless. Now, will God keep His servants in such work? If they were His prisoners in a military prison, it would be natural He should. But they are not—they are His sons and He loves them. Will He keep them to such weary work as this? Must they always do that which discourages and disappoints them? No man, whoever he may be, likes to be given work which appears to be altogether a waste of time and effort. To his own mind it seems to have a touch of the ridiculous about it and he fears that he will be despised of his fellows for aiming at the impossible. Shall it then always be our lot to treat with hard-hearted men and women? Will the great Farmer bid His plowmen spill their lives for nothing? Must His preachers continue to cast pearls before swine? Shall they continue to speak to deaf ears? Must they always expostulate with stones and prophesy to those who are less sensible than the beasts of the field? If the consecrated workers are so bidden of their Lord, they will persevere in their painful task—but their Master is considerate of them and I ask you also to consider whether it is reasonable to expect a zealous heart to be forever occupied with the salvation of those who never respond to its anxiety? Shall the horses always plow upon the rock? Shall the oxen always labor there?

Then think again—there is *the Master* to be considered. The Lord—is He always to be resisted and provoked and yet continue to have patience? Many of you have had eternal life set before you as to be received by simply believing in Jesus Christ—and you have refused to believe. Now, my Lord might have said to me, "Go home. You have done your du-

ty with them. Never set Christ before them again—I am not going to have My Son insulted." If you offer a beggar in the street a shilling and he refuses and will not have it, you cheerfully put it into your purse and go your way—you do not stand there begging him to have his wants relieved. But behold, our God in mercy has been begging sinners to come to Him, imploring them to accept His Son. In His condescension, He has even come down to be like a salesman in the market, crying, "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters and he that has no money, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price." In another place He says of Himself, "All day long have I stretched out My hands to a disobedient and gainsaying generation." Well, if the Lord of mercy has been refused and the Lord of love has been despised so long in the sight of you who reverence Him, does not some indignation mingle with your pity—and while you love sinners and would have them saved—do you not feel in your heart that there must be an end to such insulting behavior and such matchless patience? You cannot always be pleading with those who will not be persuaded, for he that refuses you refuses Him that sent you. I ask those whose hearts are hard to think of the matter in this light and if they do not respect the plowman, yet let them have regard to his Master.

And then, again, there are so many *other people* who are needing the gospel and who would receive it if they had it, that it does seems as if it would be wise to leave off wearying oneself about these people who will not have it. What did our Lord say? He said that if the mighty things which had been done in Bethsaida and Chorazin had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented. What is more wonderful still, He says that if He had worked the same miracles in Sodom and Gomorrah which He worked in Capernaum, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes. Well, then, does it not occur to us at once to give the Word to those who will have it and leave the despisers to perish in their own willfulness? Does not reason say, Let us send off this medicine for the sick where there are sick people who will value it, for these people refuse it"? There are thousands of people willing to hear the gospel. See how they crowd wherever the preacher goes—how they tread upon one another in their anxiety to listen to him. And if these people who hear him every day will not receive the message of God, "In God's name," he says, "let me go somewhere else where there is a probability of finding soil that can be plowed." "Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plow there with oxen?" Must I work always where nothing comes of it? Does not reason say, let the Word go to China, to India, or to the utmost parts of the earth where they will receive it, for those who have it preached in the corners of their streets despise it and think it a common thing, if not an utter nuisance?

I shall not lengthen out this argument, but shall just put the question again. Would any one of you continue to pursue an object when it proved to be hopeless? Have you ever attempted to make a child who has been in a fit and fretful, happy and good-tempered? You have said many kind

and gentle things and you have used a few sharp words too, but as my little lord would not come round, you have said to yourself, "Then let him sulk until he has had it out." And if the Lord has sent His servants to speak kind, gracious, tender things and men will not hear, do you wonder if He should say, "Let them alone. They are joined unto their idols. Let them alone." There is a limit to the patience of men and we soon arrive at it. And assuredly there is a limit, though it is long before we outrun it, to the patience of God. "At length," He says, "it is enough, My Spirit shall no longer strive with them. Now will I henceforth let them alone." If the Lord does this, can any of us blame Him? Is not this the way of wisdom? Does not prudence itself dictate it? If we put it to any man of thoughtful mind here, he will say, "Ay, ay, it cannot always be that the rock should be plowed by the oxen."

IV. Fourthly, THERE MUST BE AN ALTERATION then and that speedily. Can this be altered? Can the oxen be taken off the rock? Yes, it can be easily done and very likely it will happen before long to some hard hearts now before me. It can be done three ways.

First, the person can be taken away so that the unprofitable hearer shall no more hear the gospel from the lips of his best-approved minister. There is a preacher who evidently touches the man a little and has some sort of power over him, but as he rejects his testimony and remains impenitent, he shall be removed to another town. He shall hear monotonous discourses which will not touch his conscience nor disturb his lethargy. He shall go into a lone village or a foreign land where he shall be no longer persuaded and entreated—and there he will sleep himself into hell. That may be readily enough done—perhaps some of you are making arrangements even now for your own removal from the house of hope.

Another way is to take away the plowman. He has done his work as best he could, now call him off from his hopeless task. Let him go home. He is weary—let him go home. The soil would not break up, but he could not help that, let him have his wage. He has broken his plow at the work—let him go home and hear his Lord say, "Well done." He was willing to keep on at the disheartening labor as long as his Master bade him, but it is evidently useless, therefore let him go home, for his work is done. He has been sick, let him die and enter into his rest. This is by no means improbable.

Or there may happen something else. The Lord may say, "Now, that piece of rock shall never trouble the plowman any more. I will take it away." And he may take it away in this fashion—the man who has heard the gospel but rejected it will die. I pray my Master that He will not suffer this to happen in the case of any one of you, that you should die in your sins—die impenitent—for then we cannot reach you any more or indulge the faintest hope for you. No prayers of ours can follow you into eternity. The most ardent lover of your souls cannot hope that there shall be an escape for you after death. There is one name by which you may be saved and that name is sounded in your ears—the name of Jesus. But if

you reject Him now, even that name will not save you, for He shall be your terror. From His face you shall flee away and your great cry shall be, "rocks, hide me! Mountains, fall upon me! Hide me from the face of Him that sits upon the throne and from the face of the Lamb." You will dread Him and well you may dread Him, though at this hour He waits to be gracious to you. I pray you do not destroy your own souls by continuing to be obstinate against almighty love. Oh that the Lord might do for you what we cannot. May He make you willing in the day of His power, for otherwise, as surely as you live and God lives, if it comes to close quarters with you and your offended God—with no Christ between to be the Mediator—it will go hard with you. "Beware," He says, "you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver you." Do not mind anything that I say on my own, but look at the Word of God for yourselves and you shall find that the Inspired Scripture has in it terrible threatenings against impenitent sinners, and there is no imagery (though borrowed from the mediaeval times, against which our adversaries make so much noise), there is no imagery that at all exaggerates the terror which must actually fall upon every soul that commits suicide by rejecting the Savior and spits into the face of God's own Christ by saying, "I would sooner be lost than have Him to save me," for that is virtually what every unbelieving soul is saying.

God, grant that some better thing may happen. I close by saying is there any alternative to all this? Can nothing else be done? This soil is rock—can we not somehow sow it without breaking it? No, it must be broken. "You must be born-again." "Except a man receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child he can in no wise enter therein." There must be repentance, for without repentance there is no remission of sin. But is there not a way of saving men somehow without the gospel and without the grace of God? The Lord Jesus did not say so—He told us to preach as follows—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned." He does not hint at a middle course or hold out a "larger hope," but He says, "He that believes not shall be damned," *and so he must be*. God grant that no soul here may dream that there may perhaps be some back door to heaven, for the Lord has provided none. What then? Shall the preacher be permitted to continue his fruitless toil of plowing? Yes, he is willing. He is willing if there is only half a hope left him—willing to go on and say—"Hear, you deaf and see, you blind and look, you dead." He will even so speak this day, for his Master bids him preach the gospel to every creature, but it will be hard work to repeat the word of exhortation for years to those who will not hear it.

Happily, there is one other turn which affairs may take. There is a God in heaven. Let us pray to Him to put forth His power. Jesus is at His side—let us invoke His interposition. The Holy Spirit is almighty—let us call for His aid. Brothers who plow and my brethren and sisters who help us as we plow and long for our success, cry to the Master for help. The horse and the ox evidently fail, but there remains One above who made both ox and horse and who is able to work great marvels. Did He not

once speak to the rock and turn the flint into a stream of water? Let us pray to Him to do the same now.

And, oh, if there is one who feels and mourns that his heart is like a piece of rock, I am so glad he has come so far as feeling it, because he who feels that his heart is a rock gives some evidence that the flint is beginning to be transformed. O rock, instead of smiting you tonight, as Moses smote the rock in the wilderness and erred therein, I would speak to you. O rock, would you become like wax? O rock, would you dissolve into rivers of repentance? O rock, fall down with that wish. Echo to the voice of exhortation! O rock, break with that good desire! O rock, dissolve with that longing for God begins. He is working upon you now. Who knows, but at this very moment you shall begin to crumble? Do you feel the power of the Word? Did the sharp plowshare touch you just now and did you begin to break up? Break and break again, till by contrition you are broken in pieces all asunder, for then will the good seed of the gospel come to you and you shall receive it into your bosom—and we shall all behold the fruit thereof.

And so I will fling one more handful of good seed and have done. If you desire eternal life, trust Jesus Christ and you are saved at once. "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth," says Christ, "for I am God, and beside Me there is none else." He that believes in Him has everlasting life. "Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

O Lord, break up the rock and let the seed drop in among its broken substance—and get a harvest from the dissolved granite at this time, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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CONCEALING THE WORDS OF GOD
NO. 1471

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 27, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

(On behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society).

"I have not concealed the words of the Holy One."
Job 6:10.

JOB'S dire distress was aggravated by the remarks of his friends. Eliphaz the Temanite opened fire against him in such words as these, "Behold, you have instructed many and you have strengthened the weak hands. Your words have upheld him that was falling and you have strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon you and you faint; it touches you, and you are troubled." As much as to say, you can preach but you cannot practice. Where now are your sermons and advices to others? It was a shameful thing thus to throw in the good man's teeth his testimonies in former days, but Job who under all his sorrow always retained his clearness of intellect and singular shrewdness, took the words of Eliphaz and used them for his own comfort. They were bread and meat to him, though brought in a raven's mouth. "Yes," he said, "I have comforted many and my words have instructed the ignorant and strengthened the feeble, and this is so much my comfort in the hour of my affliction that I dare even ask God to let loose His hand upon me and end my life. Let Him not spare me, for I have the testimony of my conscience that I have not been disloyal to my God. The taunt of my accuser proves that I have not concealed the words of the Holy One." It is always well to be able to turn the enemy's guns upon himself and to extract comfort from that which was meant to grieve us.

Job made no idle boast when he said that he had not concealed the words of the Holy One, for we know from his history that he had been a bold confessor of the truth of God. We are informed that he was carefully watchful as to his own family that the words of the Holy One should be there esteemed and known, especially that grandest of all holy words concerning sacrifice and atonement, for we read that when his children had kept birthdays at each other's houses and had fulfilled their days of feasting, "Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, it may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually." He was earnest for the purity of his family and the keeping up of the sacrifices which were typical of the cleansing of sin—and thus he made known to his descendants the central word of all the words of the Holy One. Even in the time of his affliction, the patriarch had not spoken other than according to the mind of God. What said he

when he had lost all his possessions and was left without a child? "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there: The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; and blessed be the name of the Lord." And when his wife, seeing him covered with a loathsome disease, bade him curse God and die, he did not withhold his testimony from her, but said, "What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?" These were words given him of the Lord in the moment of his need and he shunned not to utter them with all his heart. The inspired testimony about this holy man is that, "In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

It is clear that in his prosperity Job was a most faithful witness for God. We will not speculate about the time or the place in which he lived, but wherever he lived, he was a man of great influence and was held in high esteem. He says, "When I went out to the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street, the young men saw me and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up. The princes refrained talking and laid their hand on their mouth." This influence was always exerted for the cause of truth and righteousness, which is always the cause of God. In the 29th chapter, he says of himself, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem." He was thus by his conduct a perpetual protest against sin, a continued proclamation of justice, righteousness, mercy, and love in the age in which he lived. And he could, therefore, say without any word of egotism, "I have not concealed the words of the Holy One." This was now a comfort to him when all other comforts failed—he knew that his affliction was not the fruit of a treacherous departure from God or a cowardly concealment of his faith. He felt that he could face death and even long for it because he had been loyal to his God and faithful to the light which had been given him from on high. It was not self-righteousness which led Job to speak thus, but only such a use of the sure evidences of grace as would be natural and proper in any godly man in the hour of his extremity. It is the nature of obedience to yield peace to the heart and no one can be blamed for enjoying that peace. It cannot be wrong for our consciences to bear testimony to the sincerity and purity of our lives, nor wrong that when our hearts condemn us not, we have confidence towards God. He who is most undivided in his faith in Jesus may, nevertheless, derive comfort from having been enabled to be loyal to his God. Did not Paul bless God for much the same faithfulness as Job claimed when he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"? Happy shall he be who has a clear testimony within his soul that he has declared the truth of God in all honesty and earnestness, even to the end.

Job had not refrained from an *open confession* of his own faith in God—he had been known in the gates of the city as a worshipper of the Lord, a perfect and an upright man—one that feared God and eschewed

evil. He had never hidden his faith, but had acknowledged one God whom he here calls the *Holy One*. While many gods and lords divided the fealty of nations, Job was true to the one only God and believed His words as they were revealed to him. Nor was he content with an open confession of his own faith. Job had made a continued *communication* of what he knew to others. He had taught his family—there all teaching should begin. He had taught his fellow citizens by his example—the most powerful of all teaching. Never had he wandered into idolatry, or worshipped the sun when it shined, or kissed his hand to the queen of heaven, but on the contrary, he had avowed the one and only Lord without fear. He asks, "Did I fear a great multitude or did the contempt of families terrify me that I kept silence?" So faithful had he been that he cries, "Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know my integrity." This was high ground to take, but it evidently strengthened the good man's heart to bear his troubles and it will do the same for us if we can win the same witness from our consciences.

Now, brethren, this is a comfort we ought to seek. It should be our care that when we come to die, we may not have to cry, "I was ashamed of Jesus and now I shall find Him ashamed of me. I hid His truth in unrighteousness, wrapping my talent in a napkin. What shall I do, or where shall I turn? A servant unfaithful to His trust, I have to give an account of my stewardship and I cannot do it! Woe is me!" God grant that we may be able to say with Job, "I have not concealed the words of the Holy One." Many professors will need greatly to alter their ways, or they will be covered with confusion in the Day of the Lord. Blessed and holy is he who can declare with David or rather with David's Son, "I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving-kindness and Your truth from the great congregation" (Psa 40:10).

We have more of the words of the Holy One than Job had and should, therefore, be the more anxious to make them known. I suppose he had no inspired Book to read—he could not have had any more than the books of Moses and probably he had not those—but the Lord spoke to him as He often spoke to the prophets in the olden time and he had also learned those truths which had been handed down from the earliest days from father to son. Now we have a vast mass of sacred literature and we have besides that the Word Himself, who is the hope of our souls and the Lord of our hearts. O brethren, if we wickedly hide what God has revealed to us, we shall be veiling a great light and we shall heap up guilt like the hills. When we come to die, we shall feel a misery proportionate to the enormity of our crime—we shall be tortured with agonizing thoughts for having, as far as we were able, quenched the Spirit and blotted out the testimony of the Most High. God forbid that we should be guilty of such an enormity.

Job, according to the language of our text, evidently had a great reverence for every word of the Lord. He would not have used that term, "the Holy One," if he had not felt the holiness of the words, themselves and if he had not stood in solemn awe of Him who spoke them. He felt that they must not be concealed, because the words of the Holy One should have

free course and be published abroad. Should not the word of a king be circulated through the length and breadth of his dominions? Have you and I such a reverence for every revealed truth? Do we stand in awe of every word of God? If we do, it will be well for us if we practically express our homage after the fashion of David, who said, "With my lips have I declared all the judgments of Your mouth." The words which God speaks are uttered that *we* may speak them. It is the best homage to a word to hear it and to repeat it. Let us proclaim God's words abroad—they are light and are not meant to be hidden. Such candles ought never to be put under a bushel. To hide the divine words would be a great sin against the Most High and to warn you against it will be the aim of this morning's discourse. I shall speak with the earnest prayer that both to myself and to each one of you there may be a personal voice from God stirring every conscience as to this matter and making each one of us inquire whether or not we also can say, "I have not concealed the words of the Holy One."

We shall divide our subject thus. First, we shall have a little to say about *the sin to be avoided.* Then we will give some strong *arguments for avoiding it,* and thirdly, suggest some *methods by which we may be enabled to avoid it*.

I. Here is A SIN TO BE AVOIDED, concealing the words of the Holy One. Now, we can conceal those words *from ourselves* as well as from others. "How can we conceal them from ourselves?" you ask. I think that very great stress must be laid upon this form of the evil which lies at the root of the second shape of it. We can conceal the Word of God from ourselves in many ways. The law of God speaks with a searching and threatening voice—it tells us of our sin, it forewarns us of the punishment, and it sets our danger, both present and future, before our mind's eye, but there are thousands of persons who never give the law an opportunity of being heard in their hearts—they turn a deaf ear to anything which is unpleasant to them—they do not like to face the honest truth. You know why this is. Why does not a man who is bankrupt in business take any pleasure in his books? Why is it that he postpones all settlements and endeavors to forget his affairs? Is it not because his ruin is near at hand? If there is any truth, my friend, that you are afraid of, you have cause to be afraid of it. But let me forewarn you that there is no escaping from a fact by endeavoring to forget it. Every honest man, every brave man, every man who is truly a man, would like to face his true condition and see what and where he is. One of the prayers which I commend to your frequent use is this, "Lord, let me know the very worst of my case that I may not be living upon vain pretensions and may not be pluming myself with being in a happy condition while all the while I am in awful danger." Let it never be said of any one of you that you concealed the words of the Holy One about yourselves by refusing to feel their force lest they should end the flattering visions of your fond conceit. Love the truth even though it cut you to the quick. Ask God to search you and try you and to make you sensible of sin and of judgment to come—this is the part of honesty and common sense. You will indeed be foolish if you conceal the words of the Holy One from your conscience and so flatter your soul into destruction.

Others conceal the gospel word, that word which speaks of the free gift of pardoning mercy, which is of many offenses unto justification. They go about to find out some way of their own for self-salvation and do not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God. Beloved, do pray the Lord to help you to know the gospel thoroughly and to understand its glorious simplicity, its sweet freeness and boundless fullness. Do not put out the light which alone can lead you to eternal life. Do not shut your eyes to the divine lamp—do not conceal from yourselves those humbling but yet soul-saving doctrines which make for your soul's eternal peace. Shut not against yourselves the one gate of paradise. Hide the gospel in your heart by all means, but hide it not from your heart, lest you sin against your own soul.

I ought also to warn every Christian here of concealing any of the words of God from himself by accepting half the truth and rejecting the rest. Receive *the whole of revelation*. Some professors have favorite texts and choice portions of Scripture—and they regard other parts of the Word with aversion—avoiding them as much as possible because they do not agree with their system of divinity and need much squaring before they will fit in with their foregone conclusions. They do not read such passages or they read them carelessly, or a commentator is sought out who, by the exercise of much ingenuity, will impute another meaning than the true one to the words of God. Brethren, open your souls to divine light. Give the Word of God free admittance into your spirits. Lay no embargo upon any form of the truth. Demand no toll for the commodities of heaven. Let your mind be an open port, carrying on a free trade in the treasures of the gospel. Believe whatever God says, because God says it, though you may not always see its why and wherefore or perceive its internal consistency. Be prepared and even anxious to know the whole truth as far as you can know it and let it pervade your entire being with its holy influence. It will be a terrible thing if one of these days you shall have to say, "I rejected a great truth. I had a suspicion that it was so, but I did not wish to believe it and so I shut my ears to its evidence. I had a leaning towards the opposite view and I felt committed to it and so refused to change." Open both your eyes, my brethren. If you cannot see everything, yet see all you can see and pray the Lord to take each scale away that you may know all the truth and so the truth may make you wholly free.

There is again a concealing of the truth from ourselves in one other respect, namely, when we try to avoid the word of command. There are some professed Christians of peculiar doctrinal opinions to whom the word "duty" is something dreadful and if the preacher dwells upon gospel precepts they call him "legal." I am not much in awe of that word myself for being interpreted it means lawful and none of us would like to be unlawful preachers. These folks insinuate that the preaching of the practical precepts of the gospel is in conflict with the grace of God and is little better than preaching up human merit. Whereas the doctrine of God our Savior is always a doctrine according to holiness and good works are the sure results of true faith. True gospel preaching does not decry holy living. Nay, it sets up the highest possible standard and declares the way to

reach it. Beware of picking and choosing in reference to the commands of Christ. Some professors object to much of the teaching of Him whom they call Master and Lord. The forgiving of injuries as we hope to be forgiven, the non-resistance principle of turning the other cheek when one is struck—these are very objectionable to ordinary religionists. Such precepts are denounced as impracticable and it is asserted that they cannot be carried out. Doing unto others as you would that they should do to you is regarded as a golden precept for other people to practice towards our dear selves, but not at all a practical maxim from us to the general public. When persons speak of our Lord's precepts as good but impracticable, they make Him out to be an amiable simpleton. Is this their reverence for the incarnate wisdom? I need not stop to quote examples, but there are many such things in the Word of God as precepts which good men decline to see which indeed they declare that they cannot see. If you put a gold piece over the boldest printed verse in the Bible, you will not be able to see the passage and there are some whose profits in business, whose position in life, above all, whose "respectability" will not allow them to see certain precepts and so they do not see them and they pass through life without obeying the most plain command of the Lord. I pray you do not do so, for willful ignorance is no excuse for disobedience. It is written, "He that knew his master's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." And, mark you, he that did not know his master's will, but might have known it and deliberately declined to know it, shall take his place with those who bear the heavier punishment. The plea of ignorance shall not avail such persons except it be to make them also take their place with the man who receives the few stripes and so they shall partake in both the greater and the lesser scourging, inasmuch as they are worthy to range with both kinds of offenders. Try to know what God would have you do and pray that by His Holy Spirit, when you know it, you may put it into speedy and cheerful practice and this shall be a comfort to you.

Still, the point I want to bring out is that the holy man in our text *had not concealed God's truth from others*. We can do this in many ways. We can conceal the words of the Holy One by *not confessing the truth at all*. A Christian, but he never said so! He hid himself along with Joseph of Arimathea, although he never offered his new tomb to his Lord. He justified himself by the example of Nicodemus, though he never brought spices for his Lord's burial! There was a time when there might be secret disciples of Christ, but that was before the cross was lifted up, but it is written, concerning our Lord's death, that the thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed by it and now Christ's followers follow Him openly. I should not like to be among those who expect to slink into heaven by a back door some dark night and intend never to disclose themselves till they throw off the mask and stand before the wondering eyes of angels. Christians who passed through the world disguised as unregenerate men? No, no, our Lord has said, "He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess. But he that denies Me, him will I deny." Do not run risks upon that score. If you love the Lord, say so. If you expect Him to own you, own Him.

We may conceal the words of the Holy One, although we have made an open confession, by a *sinful silence* about the gospel towards others. I am afraid I should not be too censorious if I said that there are many professors of religion who never talk of Christ to others and never seek the salvation of anybody. Are there any such people here in this gallery or down below in this area? You have found a medicine which has healed your soul, but you never mention it to the thousands who are sick around you! You have not even named it to your own children! Can such cruelty be possible? Where do you sit? Are you there? No, good people, do not move away from him! I hope he still has something human about him, though certainly not much that is *humane*. You were hungry and you have found bread and you have eaten it—and yet though around you thousands are perishing with hunger, you have no pity on them! Many loaves are in your stores at home, but you spare none for these starving ones. You eat your morsel alone and all the while thousands are dying outside your window, yes, they are perishing by millions. Do you care nothing for their woes? Are you a man or a demon? The Lord have mercy upon you! I will say no more than this, for I think I need not prove that it must be an atrocious sin for a man to know the words of the Holy One and not to make them known to others. This sin is easily committed by a silence which pleads modesty, but which ought to confess to cowardice—therefore be aware of the cheat.

Some who speak often, nevertheless conceal the words of the Lord by *their own words*. The Roman Catholic Church stands convicted of concealing the words of the Holy One by the use of the Latin tongue in the daily service. Whatever there is of good in the mass ought to be spoken in such language that everybody can understand and receive it, but instead the people stand and look on and know not what is being done, and if there is anything that might edify and instruct, they are not cognizant of it because it is hidden from them by words unknown to them. Protestants! You condemn this practice, but are not many of you as guilty yourselves? Did you listen to that splendid sermon? What rhetoric! What oratory! But those poor people in the aisles did not understand a word or if they did, they only comprehended disconnected sentences and lost the soul of the discourse. Is this right? Is this according to the scriptural idea of preaching? "Oh, but," you say, "the great man does not preach to that class of people." But His Master did and He bade men take note that in the gospel dispensation the poor have the gospel preached unto them. He would have His ministers preach so that they can be understood of all men. It is a pity when you hang the cross with your artificial flowers until you hide the wounds of Christ. Down, down, down with all your tawdry rhetoric! Your so-called eloquence deserves a curse since it robs the simple of a blessing. Few things have so much damaged the church of God as "the wisdom of words." A sweet and solemn simplicity which a child can comprehend is after the fashion of our Master, therefore let us aim at it. When you talk about Jesus Christ make your speech very plain, lest under the ornaments of your language you should conceal the words of the Holy One.

The thing can be done again by clouding the truth with *error*. There is such a thing as laying a substratum of truth and then overlaying it with human opinions, after the manner of the boastful school of modern thought whose novelties are set before us as the matured fruit of the culture of the 19th century—this also is concealing the words of the Holy One. You may perhaps have seen ancient parchments containing words of holy writ which have been covered over and then re-written with popish legends—these palimpsests (that is their technical name) are the types and symbols of the discourses of the philosophical divines of the school of *culture*. The gospel of Jesus Christ is hidden by their so-called "thought"—*their own* thoughts are set before the thoughts of God. What shall we say to such thinking but that it is a presumptuous setting up of human intellect above the revelation of the Lord? What shall we say of such culture but that it cultivates a pride which had better have been cut up by the roots? It conceals the words of the Holy One that fallible man may sit upon the throne of wisdom and make his own religion and be his own God.

We may yet further conceal the words of God by an inconsistent life. You have often heard it said that the worldling does not read his Bible, but he reads professing Christians—he never troubles to read a chapter, but he reads his godly relatives. Many a man has found Christ through reading some dear and venerated mother whose living and dying experience has been God's testimony to his soul. See, then, if our lives are crooked, perverse, unkind, ungenerous, unholy, selfish, un-Christly—we conceal the words of God—for men will not read a true gospel in us, nor have a true idea of our religion. They will not care to hear a gospel which produces such characters as ourselves, if those characters are unlovely. Men lay all our faults at the door of our Master and thus we crucify Him afresh. They say, "That is your religion," though they must know better. They will always say so, for after this manner the enemies of God have always gloried over Israel. He who lives not after a godly and holy sort is guilty of concealing the words of the Holy One in the most injurious manner. Let us all try to avoid this sin because it is contrary to the practical genius of Christianity which commands godly men to shine as lights in the world. Sinful silence, as to the blessed word of grace, is rebellion against our Lord's last command—"Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Therefore, be not chargeable with so grave a crime.

II. In the second place, we will give a mere outline of the ARGUMENTS FOR AVOIDING THIS SIN. The subject is weighty and deserves a longer consideration, but time compels me to condense. And first, the man who conceals the Word of God is out of order with God. God speaks that He may be heard and that His mind may be known. The evident design of words is to make known the speaker's mind. To run parallel with God's wish, therefore, is to give His words free course to the ends of the earth. O you who profess to be a child of God, will you run counter to the design of the Most High, and when He speaks will you, by concealing His words, make Him to be as though He spoke not? Such a silence is out of gear with the whole course of nature. "The heavens are telling the glory of

God and the firmament shows His handiwork: day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge." The whole creation, after its own inarticulate manner, proclaims its Maker and Preserver. Rocks find a voice and waters have a tongue. Stars sing by shining and darkness preaches by its solemnity. Should man alone be dumb? God forbid that he should be creation's silent chord when every other string is vibrating with praise. No, let us pray the Holy Spirit to put us into order with God and with His universe—and let us no more conceal His words.

If you wish to see the sin of concealing the gospel, think of the consequences which would have followed if others had done so. If the apostles had never risked their lives to preach, what had the nations been? If martyrs had never yielded their blood in testimony, would not thick darkness have brooded over the nations still? Imagine the consequences, if you can, if Luther had taken the advice of his godly but timid friend, when he said, "Get to your cell and pray: meddle not with things too high for you." Imagine what history would have been if Wycliffe and Tyndal and Calvin and Zwingli and all those lights of the world had hidden themselves through cowardice. They would have been guilty, but we had been miserable. Now, what would have been criminal in them must be evil in us also in proportion to our degree. We owe it to coming generations that we hand on the torch of the truth as it has been handed down to us. Let us not be unfaithful to our trust.

If we conceal the words of the Holy One, we shall evidently err because the motive for so doing can hardly be supposed to be other than sinful. If we conceal God's truth, it will probably be out of cowardice—and to be a coward under the command of such a Captain as ours is treason. Probably self-love will be the ruling motive, but we are told expressly that he who loves his life shall lose it and that Christ is to be better loved than life itself. Those who love the Word of God are often moved to do so by pride, which cannot stoop to be despised or fear, which dreads ridicule or love of the world, which seeks the applause of men. Is it not atrocious ingratitude to Him who was derided and spit upon for our sakes if we hide His glory to escape from shame? I feel it difficult to conceive an argument for concealing God's Word which would hold water for a single moment. Certainly I can invent none which will bear the test of the great trial day to which we all must come. If then the motive of such concealment is evil, it must itself be evil.

I have already hinted that common humanity requires that if we have received the precious truth of God, we should not conceal it. I feel as if your natures responded to the remark and that I needed not again enforce it, having done so already. If you love men; if you would make them happy here, if you would save them from perishing hereafter, I beseech you make known to them with holy earnestness the way of salvation contained in the words of the Holy One. For if not, let it be known unto you that all the results of concealment will be chargeable against you. If the next generation should become more wicked than the present and still more ignorant of the gospel, the fact will be chargeable upon those who conceal the words of God today. If the masses, though not knowing the gospel, reject it and continue in their sin, the calamity and crime will be

charged upon those dumb lips which never speak of Jesus. If sinners sink to hell, passing out of this world unsaved and they have come into contact with Christian men who gave them no warning, on whose hands will their blood be found? Yes, more—remember that even if sinners are saved by some other agency, it does not exonerate those who neglected to warn them—for since the silence naturally tended to destruction, those who were guilty of it shall be judged as if the uninstructed were destroyed, even though by God's interposition it is not so. If the natural result of any line of conduct is prevented by divine interference, its criminality is by no means lessened. The conduct itself may be judged by what it would naturally result in if it were left to itself. Many a man has been guilty of murder that, nevertheless, did not actually spill his fellow's blood because he did that which he knew would kill and it is no praise of his that death did not come of it. So, if a corrupt, unholy silence would slay a soul, even though that soul is saved, the wickedly silent one is guilty of soul murder all the same. You are shifting uneasily in your seats, some of you—this is a good sign—for many might do so without being too sensitive.

How again, dear friends, can any man prove his loyalty to his God or his likeness to the Savior if he continues to conceal the words of the Holy One? What can you do for God but obey Him? And when He speaks to you, you must gladly make known to others the truth which has sounded in your ears. How can you be like Jesus, your professed Master, if you have no witness to bear for the good of men? He went about doing good. His life was transparent. He wore the gospel on His sleeve, spoke it with His eyes and revealed it in His daily life. How can you be like Him if you do smuggle away the gospel as if it were contraband goods to be hidden away from all eyes? How can you bury the priceless truth like a miser who hoards up his cankered gold! Tell out the heavenly message! Tell it all around! Tell it so long as voice remains! If you are a true servant of God, you can not stifle the voice of Jesus, who out of heaven cries to the sons of men.

Now, think once more and we shall see the sinfulness of the conduct we denounce. What will it be to meditate upon a dying bed on having known the truth, but having never in any way assisted to spread it? What will it be to die with eternity just before you and to reflect, "I have been a member of a church many years, but I have never brought in a single convert. I sat in my pew and I knew the divine secret, but I never told even a child of it. Neither by pen nor tongue did I make Jesus known. I left that to the minister. I knew there were good people about who cared for men's souls, but I had no such feeling—I kept myself to myself and felt no anxiety about my neighbors. I had very little care as to whether souls were saved or not. I was glad when I heard of an increase in the church, but not very particularly so. I was rather sorry when things were down—not so sorry that I lost my appetite or lay awake 10 minutes. I did not trouble myself more than I could help, for I was foolish enough to dream that the best thing I could do was to consult my own interests and I fancied that my chief end was to enjoy myself forever." Now, I can imagine such a person sorely beset with horrors when he

comes to die and struggling hard to get anything like a glimpse of hope. His whole life has been that of selfishness—how can he be a Christian? Conscience will ask him, "Is this Christ-like, this keeping back of the divine bread from the perishing millions, this concealing of the light of God? Surely you are no follower of the Crucified!"

How will such conduct look at the last great day? The Lord Jesus will say to some, "I was hungry and you gave Me no meat: I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink." Now mark, these sentences refer to temporal bread and water, but they must be more emphatic still when they relate to spiritual things. If the Lord Jesus shall say, "There were hungering souls and you professed to know the gospel, but you gave them no meat. There were thirsty souls and you professed to have drank of the water of life and you gave them no drink," can there be any answer? Will not such persons stand speechless—dumbly confessing the justice of the sentence, "Depart, you cursed"?

III. I shall close by mentioning one or two METHODS BY WHICH WE MAY AVOID THIS SIN. I am speaking now to you who have believed in Jesus and are truly His own disciples.

First, take care that you make an open profession of your faith. Come out from the world and unite with the people of God. If you do not make a profession, I do not see how you can be found innocent of the charge of concealing the Lord's words.

When you have done that, keep yourself clear of sinful silence by very often speaking to others of the things of God. I was greatly pleased this week when a brother minister said to me, "A man has just joined our church, a rough man who mixed in company that was not likely much to improve him and yet he has been really made a new man. He was accustomed to go round to houses with small casks of beer for a large brewery and among the rest he called at a certain house where the servant is a member at the Tabernacle. She had not seen him more than once or twice before she began to ask him whether he knew the Savior and to question him about his soul. And when he called each month she spoke to him again, till at last he who had never thought of religion, nor entered a place of worship at all, was brought to the feet of Jesus and has become an honor to the church of which he is a member." This minister said, "I hope all your members do as that servant does." I told him I knew a great many of you did, but no doubt some of you did not. You who do not may well fidget upon your seats as you take home the hint. From now on, at every opportunity speak of Jesus to those around you, lest you be found guilty of concealing the words of the Holy One.

Some of you cannot *speak* very much because you are naturally diffident and slow of speech. Try and overcome the infirmity, but if you cannot do so, do not conceal the words of the Most High on that account, but write letters of personal entreaty. You can do this, can't you? Some of you can write very well indeed and you write so much that it is much easier for you to write than for friends to read. As you can write so well, write for Jesus Christ—write earnestly and lovingly for Jesus. You can also circulate what has been written by other people, though I do not think it so good a thing to do as writing yourself. You may send tracts

and sermons, but let them be such as you may hope that people will read. Sometimes you may write out part of a tract and it will attract them all the more for being your own handwriting.

Another thing may be done. If you feel that when you have spoken and written you have still not done much, help other people who have greater gifts. A great deal may be done by imitating Aquila and Priscilla who helped Apollos. It is not given to everybody to preach to large numbers or to preach at all—but you can often pick up a young man and say, "I will help him in his education and encourage him in his first efforts." You can always help young men by filling the offering box, which supports the College. [Seminary.]

I married a gentleman on this platform some time ago who said to me, "I wish I could preach, but I will tell you what I will do, I will support a man to preach—I will find the money and you will find the man." I told him I must have him speak too, as best he could. He said he would, but he wished to have somebody to speak better. Men of wealth should copy this example. Help the tract distributors, help the city missionaries, help all those who publish the Word of the Lord. [If the Holy Spirit is thus burdening you, a great print/audio ministry is Mt. Zion Publications, a ministry of Mt. Zion Bible church, in Pensacola, Florida. Write them at 2603 W. Wright St., Pensacola, FL 32505, USA.]

And lastly, and this morning most to the point, there are the heathen perishing for lack of knowledge. Millions of voices call out of the darkness to you, "Come over and help us! You have the light, bring it to us! You have the bread, come and feed us! We perish, we perish, we perish." Brethren, the heathen are perishing. Will you let them perish? I wish that some young men here would go for missionaries. One of the leaders of a missionary society cheered my heart last week when he took out of his pocket an old sermon of mine, marked and crossed and scored. He said, "You will like to see that, Mr. Spurgeon." "What about it?" I asked. "That was given to me by a young man who has joined our mission. He read that sermon and marked the passages which touched his heart and now he is at work in China. I looked upon that sermon with great delight. I think I felt more pleased with that old sermon *than if I had received a wreath of gold*. I felt gratified that I had brought a young and fervent heart to devote itself to the Lord Jesus Christ. Give me the same joy, each of you, and if you cannot go among the heathen personally, help others to do so. Give, this morning, a liberal collection and may God accept it at your hands for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE GLORY, UNITY, AND TRIUMPH OF THE CHURCH
NO. 1472

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 4, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the glory which You gave Me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them, as You have loved Me."
John 17:22-3.

SOME words serve diverse uses and have many meanings. We are very apt to make mistakes if we give the same sense in all places to the same word. The word "world" throughout Scripture is used with a very remarkable variety of meaning and one had need to have his wits about him and to read carefully in order to know what is the precise force of the term in each place where it occurs. In the text before us, it is evident that Christ had a view to the world—He desired that the world might know that the Father had sent Him and might know also that God had loved His people even as He had loved His Son. From the somewhat altered expression in the 21st verse, we feel convinced that our Lord did not limit His desires for the world to its having a bare knowledge of these facts, but wished that it should also believe them, for thus runs the verse, "That the world may believe that You have sent Me." He wished then that this "world" might do exactly what He elsewhere says His own disciples had already done—"O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me." Certainly there is a world for which Jesus did not pray, for He said, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world," yet here there is a world for which, if He does not actually pray, He yet prays that certain gracious events may occur in order that certain results may be produced upon the world. I say again, the word "world," therefore, has many shades of meaning ranging from that jet black meaning in which the, "world lies in the wicked one" and that other, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," upward to the milder senses in John 1:10, "He was in the world and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." And yet higher to the brighter meaning, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ." It is not in the worst sense that our text speaks of the world, but in the same manner as we find it used in such passages as these, "The Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." And again in 1 John 2, "And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." It is certain that, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," and we

cannot suppose that the great Redeemer would refuse to pray for those for whom He was given. I understand in this particular place by the word "world," the whole mass of mankind upon the face of the earth who are not as yet converted. Among them there is an elect part, for our Lord speaks of some men who shall yet believe on Him through the word of His servants, but these at this present moment are undistinguished from the rest. I understand here by the word "world," all as yet unrenewed out of the whole living family of man—and on account of these, our Lord would have His believing people brought into that admirable condition which we shall now attempt to describe. For the sake of the world He would have the church in a high state of holy beauty and strength. May His gracious prayer be answered in all of us by the working of the Holy Spirit.

I trust that I may say of all of you, my beloved in Christ, that you are living with this objective. At any rate, I know that you desire to live for the glory of our Lord Jesus and the salvation of men. We would make all men see what is the fellowship of this mystery, for we would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Our wish is to bring multitudes to the Savior and to conquer province after province of this revolted world for King Jesus. "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory" is a prayer which we cannot, dare not, would not straiten. Half the world would be a poor reward for the Redeemer's travail. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." Even here, where He was despised and rejected of men, our Lord must reign with fullness of glory, having dominion from sea to sea and from the river even to the ends of the earth. This is the consummation towards which we are tending, by the grace of God, striving earnestly for it, according to His working which works in us mightily. Daily we labor to bring others into subjection to that blessed sovereignty under which we delight to dwell.

In this place our Lord tells us that this desirable end is to be brought about by a marvelous unity which described in our text is a unity of men with Christ, a unity of these men in Christ with one another and the unity of Christ Himself with the eternal Father. "I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one." Let us speak about this unity this morning, always keeping in mind the drift, end, and object of it, namely, that the world may believe that God has sent the Lord Jesus.

First, then, let us think upon *the great means of that unity,* and then, secondly, upon *the unity itself.* Lastly, let us more fully consider *the effect to be produced by it.*

I. First, then, let us reflect upon THE GREAT MEANS OF THE UNITY which Christ proposes here. It lies, in a nutshell, "The glory which you gave Me I have given them," with this object, "that they may be one, even as we are one." Here our blessed Lord does not speak of what He will give to His disciples, though there is a glory which is laid up for them which the faithful shall receive at the last—but He mentions a glory which He has already given them. This could not be the incommunicable glory of His Godhead, for that was His by nature and not by the Father's gift. He speaks throughout the whole of His prayer in the capacity of the Mediator who is both God and man in one person and the glory which He says He had given to His people is a glory which the Father had given to Him in His complex person as incarnate God. We are to regard, therefore, our

Lord Jesus Christ as speaking here as Immanuel, God with us, who though He counted it no robbery to be equal with God, had made Himself of no reputation and taken upon Himself the form of a servant. He appeared on earth as the Son of man, the Son of God—but even in that condescending capacity He was surrounded with a glory of which John speaks in his first chapter, "And 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." As the Word made flesh, the Father has given our Lord exceeding glory.

The explanations of the words before us are as many as the words themselves and I suppose there is a measure of truth in each of them. I do not think it possible in one sermon, perhaps not in a hundred, nor even in a thousand, to bring out all that is intended here. Therefore, I shall not attempt any such a task, but shall only follow one narrow track of practical thought, even as one passes through a field of corn along a narrow pathway gathering a few ears as he moves along. It seems to me that a main part of the glory of our Lord when on earth lay in the moral and spiritual glory of His character. He was indeed glorious in holiness and this is evidently the glory which He transfers to us. See the second epistle to the Corinthians, the third chapter and 18th verse, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." To the same effect are Peter's words in his first epistle, "If you are reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."

The essence and cause of the glory which the Father gave the Son was, first of all, that He endowed Him with the Holy Spirit. "God gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him; the Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand" (John 3:34-35). The Holy Spirit descended upon our Lord in His baptism and abode upon Him so that in the power of the indwelling Spirit He lived, spoke, acted, and in all that He did, the Spirit of God was manifest. In Him was fulfilled the word of the Lord by the prophet Isaiah, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of His roots: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." In this Spirit there is glory, for the prophet further says, "His rest shall be glorious." Now this glory our Lord Jesus has given to all His disciples. Upon each true disciple the Spirit of God rests according to his measure. If we have not the anointing to the fullest, it is either from want of capacity or by reason of our own sin, for the Spirit of God is given to the saints—He dwells with us and shall be in us evermore. My brethren, I would to God we realized this, that the glory of the Holy Spirit which was given to Christ is also given to us, so that it is ours to think, to feel, to speak, to act under His guiding influence and supernatural power. What are we of ourselves apart from the Holy Spirit? How can we hope to convince even one man, much less the world that God has sent His Son, apart from the Holy Spirit being with us? But if He will come and I trust He has come upon many of us—if He will take possession of every faculty and rule and reign in us in all the splendor of His holiness—then we

shall indeed become a power for the conversion of mankind. Behold the Lord Jesus has given us this Spirit and in that power let us henceforth live.

Owing to this endowment of the Holy Spirit, there rested upon Jesus Christ a wondrous glory in many respects. One of His first Glories was that as man He knew the name and character of God. He knew what no man knows unless it is revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, namely, the nature, attributes, and mind of God. "The pure in heart shall see God" and those pure eyes of His had seen God to the full. Has He not given us that same vision of the Father? Yes, for He tells us, "He that has seen Me, has seen the Father." And again in the sixth verse, "I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave me out of the world." Our eyes have been opened by the blessed Spirit of God to see the invisible and our understandings have been strengthened to know the incomprehensible. Now, according to the language of the apostle, we, "know God or rather are known of God." "No man has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." Not to the full have we beheld the Father, but still, according as we have received this glory which rested upon Christ we have been made to know the Father, and now we have access to the heavenly; we are familiar with the divine, we speak with the Most High, and delight ourselves in the Lord. As we gaze into the unspeakable glory, we discern something of the holiness, the justice, and the wisdom of Jehovah and we behold yet more of His great mercy and abounding love. We were once blinded, but now it is our glory that we see and know the Lord our God. Henceforth we become like our Lord in another beam of His glory, for we also begin to manifest the divine name unto the sons of men who dwell around us. The church, like the moon, reflects the glory of the great Father of lights and so is glorious with the borrowed splendor which her Lord puts upon her. Christ's knowledge of the Father is given to us and we endeavor to make it known to others. If men would see God, let them look at Jesus, for there is He to be seen. And, with bated breath, we add—let them look at Christ's people, for there also is God revealed. It is the glory of the saints that they are the mirrors of the divine character, and when they wear the glory which Jesus has given them, they manifest the eternal name unto those whom the Lord has ordained to bless by their means.

The glory of our Lord consisted, next, in the power of the Spirit in His receiving, keeping, and giving forth the Word of God. Our Lord Jesus was a full revelation of the mind of God. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." He knew the plan of God—that blessed method of infinite love—and He imparted it to His followers. "I have given unto them the words which You gave Me; and they have received them." The depository of the divine word was Christ—and this was greatly to His glory. Is not the logos—THE WORD—one of the brightest of His titles? But now, this day, He has given to us the word, speaking it into our souls and henceforth we are to hold forth the word of life in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Would you know the mind of God? It is not merely in a book—it is still incarnated in men in whom the Spirit of the Lord is present. Still does the Lord make known His mind and will by the earnest, fervent teachings, pleadings, and lives of those in whom the Spirit of God dwells. Do you think this to be a small glory?

Why, my beloved, the glory of possessing the Spirit of God, the glory of knowing the eternal God, the glory of having received His Word is such as distinguishes the chosen man above his fellows infinitely more than all the crowns, titles, and decorations which monarchs can bestow. Tell me not of your stars and garters, your ribbons and your crosses—to be made partakers of the Holy Spirit and guardians of the truth of God is a greater glory than the princes of this world can so much as imagine.

This glory of the Lord Jesus also lay in the sanctification of His blessed person. He said, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself." Look at Him how consecrated to God He was from His childhood till He said, "It is finished!" What holiness shone upon His very brow where a guileless soul unveiled itself in brave sincerity! You could not have been with Him at a funeral or at a marriage banquet, in a sick chamber or in the midst of a crowd, in the presence of carping adversaries or in the bosom of His family of 12 without being charmed by that divinity of holiness which hedged Him round about. There was about Him a sweetness of unspeakable affection and a majesty of unsullied purity which made Him glorious above all the sons of men. His enemies spat upon Him, but that very spit was the unconscious homage which malignant evil pays to conquering goodness. The ungodly crucified Him, but even in that very act there was a sort of confession that they were baffled and confounded and could not stand before Him. They cried, "Crucify Him. Crucify Him," because His perfect purity rendered their own wickedness inexcusable and lashed their conscience with reflections which could not be borne. Our Lord's moral glory was great, for He was the pattern and paragon of everything that is lovely and of good repute—and He was wholly sanctified unto God. This is the glory which He gives to us. His prayer is, "Sanctify them through Your truth: Your word is truth." His disciples live unto holiness and are known as a people zealous of good works. I have to speak as I find matters laid down in the Word of God and if you do not find them to be so in yourselves, my brothers and sisters, then you must judge yourselves by the Word that you are not judged at the last and condemned. So it is that those who have truly received Christ become a special, marked, and separated people. They are as much consecrated to God as the priests were under the old dispensation and henceforth they live for God, they live unto God, and their whole being is subjected to the mind of God. This is a high state of grace, but nothing less than this ought to content any Christian man. The glory of sanctity Christ has given to His people with an eye to the convincement of the world.

Well, then, our great Master gives us next the glory of His own mission. "As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." It is the glory of Jesus that He is the Messiah, the sent one—and now, behold, He sends all His servants to be messiahs or missionaries to mankind. Christ Jesus was sent to reveal the Father, sent to reclaim the wandering souls of men, sent to seek and to save the lost—and this is exactly what every true Christian is sent into the world to do—he is commissioned to reveal God in his every act and word. He is commissioned to win back rebellious hearts. He is commissioned to save the sons of men and bring them up out of the horrible pit into which their sins have cast them. This is a glory indeed, for they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever. What a prom-

ise is that, "And saviors shall come up on mount Zion and the kingdom shall be the Lord's." Every Christian man, according to his measure, becomes among his race what Jesus was when He was here below, the Friend of men, the seeker of the lost.

Again, I say I trust your glad hearts appreciate this glory, for let me say it is such a glory that if it involves much strictness of living and much self-denial—if it involves much disgrace, misrepresentation, and reproach—and even should it involve death by martyrdom, blessed is the man upon whom all these things come because the spirit of glory and of Christ rests upon him. The true glory of any man is the man himself, the character he bears and not the estate which he possesses. My brethren, can I hope that you have a resplendent spiritual character? Dare I hope to win the same myself? Let us look again at this glory of the Son of God. Christ Jesus was the man of men, the model man, the most manly man in all respects and yet He was of all men the most fully subordinated to the divine law and the most obedient in all things to the Father's will. See your calling, my brethren! You too are not to be common men, nor to belong to the herd that run foolishly after their own lusts—but you are to be model men, manly and brave, yet always submissive to the great Father of your spirits. We are to be such men that those who look upon us may wish that there were such as we are.

Jesus was especially a model in His perfect self-abnegation. What did He seek for Himself? A kingdom? Yes, but a kingdom whose crown was made of thorns—a kingdom of suffering love. What did He live for? That He might be glorified? Ay, but that He might be glorified by saving others while refusing to save Himself. His crowning glory is that He humbled Himself and made Himself of no reputation and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Such shall you and I be if we have the glory of Christ resting upon us—we shall give up forever all self-seeking, all desire to shine, all wish to be great, all craving to be rich—and we shall live henceforth not unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us. For God's glory and for Christ's purpose in the convincement of the world, we are to live, and if we do so the spirit of glory will be resting upon us.

The matchless Man of Nazareth had this glory—that He was one with God. The objects and aims and thoughts of God were His objects and aims and thoughts. His life ran parallel with the path of the Most High. This man was accepted of God—the love of God ever rested upon Him—He had access to God, He could speak with the Father when He would and answers out of the excellent glory were vouchsafed Him. He was prevalent with God, for His prayers brought down and still bring down countless blessings upon the sons of men. He was the Son of God and He overcame the world in the power of His sonship. Now, this glory which the Father gave Him, He has given us, that we too may be accepted; that we too may have access; that we too may have prevalence in prayer; that we too may have the Spirit of adoption and that we too may trample upon sin and overcome the hosts of darkness. This is the glory which rests upon all the faithful. Mark well that wherever this glory is seen, true unity is developed. Suppose I were to find a man living in the likeness of Christ with this spiritual glory conspicuous upon him? It may be that he is poor and illiterate, but what of that? Suppose he is a coal heaver—the

glory of his character will be none the less more conspicuous than the dust. Then let us find another man on whom the same spiritual glory rests and we will suppose that he is an earl, a supposition which, thank God, is not an impossible one. The glory will be none the dimmer because of the good man's honors. There then are the two—coal heaver and coroneted. And does it need half an eye to see that the glory of each is one? The holy consecration in each case is the same and the degrees of rank do not affect the essential beauty of either. Is it not the same life which dwells in all saintly bosoms and the same love which prompts each holy deed? In a princess or in a dairyman's daughter, in a scholar or in a peasant, the glory of a high character is one. If you found among a savage tribe a single convert, truly consecrated to Christ and living unto God according to the measure of his light, his manners might be rude and his knowledge slender, but there would be upon him the same kind of glory which you would mark as adorning a polished, educated Christian lady who in the midst of her circle spends a lovely life for Jesus. Should the untutored convert die by the spear of the savage whose soul he sought to bless, he is written in the same roll of martyrs as that which bears the names of bishops and apostles. Holiness is everywhere most precious. Unselfishness is in any instance beyond all price. Let us see love to God and love to men, and they are everywhere alike and reveal a oneness of inward life; in fact, oneness with Him who is the true life of men.

If you bring a company of common Christians together and they begin discoursing and discussing, I dare say they will jangle and debate world without end. But if you could select a number of those upon whom the glory rests which the Father gave to His Son, I will warrant you this, that within a short time they will be all on their knees together, or singing together, or engaged in some form of loving fellowship. The people who are not one with each other are those who are not one with Christ. But once filled with His Spirit, we are one of necessity. You cannot help it; it is scarcely a matter of duty—it becomes a matter of necessity that you who have the love of Christ within you should love the brethren. Spiritual men are so essentially one, that like two drops which close together, they have an increasing tendency to unite. Spiritual men may wear different denominational names and may differ in their conscientious convictions on some matters, but these things do not hinder union—they rather give a zest to it. If the glory which the Father gave to Christ is resting upon these, they have discerned the mystical unity which encompasses them all and they are delighted to acknowledge it by deeds of brotherly love rendered with spontaneous cheerfulness, blessing him who performs them and those who receive the benefits.

Beloved, those in whom Christ lives are *not uniform, but one*. Uniformity may be found in death, but this unity is life. Those who are quite uniform may yet have no love to each other, while those who differ widely may still be truly and intensely one. Our children are not uniform, but they make one family. Sons born at the same birth may exhibit a remarkable difference of character and yet the father may be seen in both and they may be equally one in the family circle and in all the love which makes home the abode of happiness. So it is with all believers—born of the same everlasting Father, they are one in spirit, one in character, one

in object, one in aim—yes, one in the fullest sense. At this moment, despite apparent differences, the whole host of the spiritual are one, and they press forward as with the tramp of one man against the common foe. I speak not of professors. I speak not of the external church. I speak not of the mixed multitude that come up out of Egypt and debase the character of our Israel. I speak of those of whom Christ could say to His Father, "The glory which You have given Me I have given them"—these are one as the Father and the Son are one, but mere professors are not.

II. Time flies too rapidly, alas, and therefore we must with great brevity think upon the second point, namely, THE UNITY ITSELF. As I have remarked, it is not uniformity. This our Lord says nothing of. Though we are one body in Him, yet all the members have not the same office—the eye is very different from the ear—and the foot has not the same form as the hand. Neither does He speak of any formal organization by which unity is to be secured. How many have tried to create a mechanical union and have made confusion worse confounded. Their eagerness for unity has threatened to dash everything to shivers. The very first step towards a visible unity of the church is with most men that they shall fix a standard of what the church ought to be and cut off everybody who will not conform thereto. See how certain brethren, to show how they hate sectarianism, invent a new sect and diligently earn from their fellow-believers the character of being more bitter and bigoted than any other professors. The oddities of non-sectarians are the scandal of the age. They have talked of union and scattered the saints right and left. Let us follow practical methods and we shall find them in the unity which the text describes.

First, it is written, "I in them." Christ lives in His people and we are so to act, in the power of the Holy Spirit, that onlookers shall say, "Surely Christ lives again in that man, for he acts out the precepts of Jesus. Did you notice how he bore the insult? Did you notice how he laid himself out to oblige and to serve? Did you observe how, without introducing religious talk, he gradually steered the conversation towards that which is to edification? Do you see how, if he stays in a hotel, or if he sojourns in a family, or if he sits in a workroom, his presence is soon felt by the pleasure which he diffuses, the confidence which he inspires?" He is everyone's friend when he is needed—the servant of all, the example of all. His voice is ever for peace and if he does now and then speak upbraidingly, men's consciences admit that he is just. Such a man honors his Lord by reminding men of Him. Our first consideration should not be, "Now I am here, how can I be comfortable?" but, "I am here, how can I please others for their good? How can I relieve the distressed, help the weary, or cheer the sad?" It is a grand thing to do good in little ways. It is a glory to be the sweetener of life at home, the self-forgetting friend of all around. The world before long confesses that Christ is in such a man. The true Christian is Jesus come to life. His name implies this—how is he a Christian who is not like Christ? We commonly say that the oil upon the head runs down to the skirts of the garment—is it so? Is the love of Jesus, the generosity of Jesus, the zeal of Jesus, the gentleness of Jesus, the consecration of Jesus to be seen in us? If so, the glory of Jesus rests on us and if not, we have need to begin again and do our first works.

The next point of the union is. "You in Me." That is, God is in Christ. This is manifestly true, for you cannot read the life of Christ without seeing God in Him. "Come, now," said one to an unbeliever, "what do you think of the life of Christ?" "I am free to confess," said the other, "that it seems to me to be a very marvelous life and in every way worthy of praise." "You do not, however, think Jesus Christ to be God?" "No, I do not." "But suppose," said the Christian, "that God had been here among men in human form—could He have acted more purely or more benevolently?" "No," said the other, "If I admit the possibility of such a thing, I am not able to conceive of anything more divinely good." "Why, then," said the Christian, "do you not see that in very deed God was in Christ Jesus and He was one with God?" So we believe and we rejoice greatly to hear our Lord say, "I and my Father are one." See, then, the unity of Christ in us and God in Christ Jesus.

This brings about the union of believers with the Father—being one with Christ and Christ being one with the Father. The point is reached for which our Lord prayed, "That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me." Couple this with believers being one with each other and you get the being "made perfect in one," of which our text speaks. If you and I are one in Christ and one with Christ, then we are one with God, seeing Christ is one with God—and thus not in some few characteristics are we alike and one in name, but in life, in aim, and in desire we are one. Brethren, if you and I are living for the same design which our Lord lived for and if the very life which quickens us is the life of Jesus, then since Jesus lives always for the same thing which God purposes and works out, then surely there is a grand unity—the likes of which is not found in the universe. This has great depths in it, which is grounded upon a mystical, spiritual union, but I leave the depths of doctrine, just now, to speak upon the experiential and practical truths which grow out of the matter of fact. Moved by the same love of holiness, inspired by the same spirit of love and tenderness and kindness, the eternal Father's will is the will of the Son and the Spirit works in us also to will and to do according to the good pleasure of the Lord. According to the measure of grace, the members of the body feel and move in union with the Head, who also is in union with the Father. "Your kingdom come" is God's will thrilling through all the members of the body of Christ. Death to sin, destruction of strife, the end of injustice, the chasing away of every form of error—these are the common objects of the Father and of all those whom He has begotten. The propagation of truth, the increase of love, the reign of gentleness and peace among men—these are the mind of God, the mind of Christ, and the mind of all the saints—and so are we one with each other by ties spiritual and divine.

III. I could not enlarge upon that subject though I wished to do so, for I must now notice THE EFFECT WHICH THIS PRODUCES according to our Lord's prophecy and prayer.

First, it will convict the world of the truth of Christ's mission, "That the world may know that You have sent Me." How will they know it? Why, when they see such characters as I have so feebly tried to paint. When they see men who are no longer selfish, hard, and ungenerous—when they see men no longer governed by their passions, men no longer

earth-bound—when they see loving men, men who desire that which is holy, just, and good, men living to God, then the world will say, "Their Master must have been sent of God." Such men as these, alas, are so uncommon and they are so precious when we find them that if the Lord Jesus has created such by His teaching and His Spirit, by His fruits may we know Him, even as we know His people, and He is manifestly sent of God.

And then, brethren, not only will their characters convince the world, but their unity will convince it because the ungodly world will say, "We see the glory of Christianity in the poor man and we see the same in the rich man. We see a glory about a Christian prince and we see the same glory about a Christian needle woman. And we observe that when these people meet each other there is a divine union among them, for they are one. Surely their Master must be sent of God." Christian people have things to talk about which others do not understand and they pursue one common object which others disregard. Whether they have little or much, they yield their all to one common cause and object. Whether possessed of little ability or great ability, they are alike consecrated. One spirit breathes in them. See how they love one another! Even the world can see that while its great ones are always contending, these dwell in love. While common men emulate each other and strive as to who shall be the greatest, these only strive to serve the common cause, to help each other, and to stoop for their fellows' good. The world cannot help perceiving the divinity of the mission of Christ which has produced this perfect love and union among His followers. Then do they say, "Assuredly God must have sent their Leader, Christ Jesus, or He could not have produced such results." Do you ask me where we see this? I reply that it is far too little seen, but when we shall see it in the whole church, then will the world be convinced. Oh, my brethren, only fancy a church of the size of this, put down in this south of London, made up of holy men and holy women like Christ, who, with all their imperfections, as to the general bent and current of their lives are living unto God and for the glory of Christ and for the good of their fellow men. Picture such a church in perfect unity and I tell you it would present an argument for Christianity which would infinitely surpass all the books of analogy and evidence which have ever been written. This would be a nut which the adversary could not crack. It would baffle all his criticisms and syllogisms. One individual Christian has often presented to the most desperate unbeliever a difficulty which has staggered him. "I could be altogether an atheist," said one, "if it were not for my aged mother, but while I see her peace of mind, her holy living, her gentle, quiet temper, I cannot but believe that there is a power in religion which I cannot understand." If we would convince the world, my brethren, it must be by the glory which God has given to His Son resting upon each and all of us and so compacting us together, fusing us into one mass of living union. By the foundation of unity in Christ can the battle be won.

But the world is also to be convinced of the Father's love to us, "And have loved them as You have loved Me." Shall we ever convince them of that? Yes, when the world sees bodies of truly consecrated men and women living together in holy love, then they will also see much joy, much peace, much mutual consolation—and they will perceive that the

very stars in heaven fight for them, that the providence of God makes all things work together for their good—and that the Lord has a special care over them as a shepherd has over his flock. Then they will say, "These are the people that God has blessed. See how He loves them." They perceive, however, that they have to suffer and that they are afflicted and despised—and so they come to say, "God seems to love them just as He loved His Son, whom He did not spare from suffering and pain and grief, but whom He upheld under all"—and so they learn that God has the same special regard for those Christ-like ones that He has for their Master and Lord. They shall be made to see this. It will be forced upon them. Moreover, as these men and women grow more and more like Jesus, the world will conclude that since God loved Jesus, He must love those who are like Christ. Why, do not even the ungodly, though they would be loath to confess it, take a kind of delight in a high and noble character? They have an admiration for it and their conscience tells them that God admires those in whom His Christ has produced it. They cannot avoid the feeling that God does love holy and loving people—and that it is great love on His part to make them what they are. So far the world becomes convinced.

But somebody may say, "What does our Lord mean by the world's knowing and believing this?" I answer that doubtless a part of the world will be convinced that Christ was sent of God and convinced that God loves His people, and yet they will stand out in obstinacy against God, for to the end even the gospel itself will be a savor of death unto death to some. Well, you and I have answered the purpose of God even upon such characters when it comes to pass that they are without excuse. But it is evident from this chapter that there is another part of the world who will not only know and believe historically, but will do this spiritually—that part of the world comprehended in our Lord's prayer, "Neither pray I for those alone, but for them also who shall believe on Me through their word." And I take it, brethren, that when the day shall come that Christians are Christians, then we shall see great masses of the world convinced of the truth of Christianity and large numbers of the world suppliant at Jesu's feet. The Christianity which is presented to the public gaze I would not be unduly censorious, but I fear it is often a Christianity which the world does well to despise. When the Jew went to Rome and asked for Christianity, he saw the Christians, so called, worshipping the Virgin Mary and images of saints and relics and bones and I know not what. And he justly said, "The Lord has said to Israel, 'The Lord your God is one God,' and, 'You shall not make unto yourself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above nor in the earth beneath. You shall not bow down to them nor worship them.'" On the strength of such revelation, the Jew rejected the Christianity of Rome and he did well. Don't you agree? Now, here comes another Christianity which has lately displayed itself to many heathen nations. It comes with the Bible in its knapsack and the Martini-Henry rifle in its hand. Is not this a fine combination for conversion? Jesus comes before the Zulu riding upon a Gatling gun. Of course, these poor heathen know nothing about our political combinations, but if they suppose that Christians are invading their land, will they, therefore, love Christ? Missionaries, here is a difficulty for you to explain—how will you deal with it? You come from a

Christian nation, a nation which enjoys the unspeakable privilege of a national church, a nation which salutes the savages in Christ's name with shot and shell! Will they receive Christianity coming in such guise? If they do not, small blame can we pour upon them—they will be only acting according to the light of reason and common sense.

If there shall ever come a Christianity which suffers long and is kind, which does no evil but seeks good to its neighbor; which teaches love to God and love to man; which seeks not its own, but lays itself out for others, then I do not say that an ungodly world will be enamored of it if left to itself, but I do believe that the Spirit of God will go forth with it and will convince men of sin and of righteousness and of judgment—and then shall the scattered family of Adam accept the one true faith and enter into a league of amity with each other—and there shall be glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men.

Love conquers all. Love is the logic which convinces. Notice two passages of Scripture with which I finish. One thing you want the world to know is that you are the disciples of Christ. "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another." Does our Lord wish the world to be convinced? How does He Himself act? Hear Him. "But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence." Love, you see again, proves the unity of the Son with the Father, and here again, in this second text, it is the love of the Father to the chosen which is to be the sign unto the world. Therefore, let love abound. Let it be all the weapons of our war.

I know I have preached very feebly to you this morning upon such a theme. The subject is a great deal too much for my limited capacity, but it is good for us to feel how little we are, how low we are. It is good to look above our struggling selves to something much beyond our present attainments. I lie prostrate on my face before the Lord and confess that I have not yet attained all that I have set forth to you and I suspect, that your confession is very like my own. Let us not be discouraged, for by grace we are on the way and we will not rest till we reach the goal. O for grace so to live unto God in Christ Jesus that the world shall never be able to answer the argument of our lives. Help us, O Spirit of the Lord. Amen.

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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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FORTS DEMOLISHED AND PRISONERS TAKEN
NO. 1473

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 11, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."
2 Corinthians 10:5.

THIS chapter presents the remarkable spectacle of a minister of the gospel of peace going forth to war. At first sight we wonder how the meek and gentle Paul should speak about warring and talk of pulling down strongholds and "having a readiness to revenge all disobedience." The surprise is all the greater because he is going to war in the church—a shepherd entering the fold with a sword. One would not so much marvel that he carried his weapons against the outside world, but on this occasion it is within the church at Corinth that he is about to commence a campaign. Yet observe how earnestly he deprecates the conflict; how he beseeches them by the meekness and gentleness of Christ to spare him a task which was so unpleasant to his feelings as to deal sternly with those whom he would far rather have commended. But the wonder ceases when we find that the shepherd fights only with grievous wolves and even in that conflict declares, "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh." Note, moreover, that his weapons are of a peculiar kind, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal." He is not about to assault his antagonists in the church with bitter words of railing such as they used against himself—he is not about to meet the philosophers with such philosophies and sophisms as those with which they assailed the gospel. And neither is he coming forth with any kind of temporal weapon to inflict anything of injury upon the leaders in error—his weapons are of a very different sort. They are not carnal, but spiritual. Trials under a Public Worship Act he knew nothing of. An appeal to Caesar upon church matters never crossed his mind. For the church of God ever to avail itself of force or compulsion in order to propagate its doctrines would be contrary to the spirit of Christianity. For the Christian bishop to become a soldier or employ the secular arm would seem to be the very climax of contradiction. A warrior ambassador is a dream of folly. I remember a story which illustrates that absurdity. When a certain bishop-prince in the olden times went forth personally to battle and was taken prisoner, the Pope sent word to the king who had captured him that he was to set him at liberty at once, for he was a son of the church. The

king, with considerable wit, sent back to the Pope the coat of armor which the bishop had worn on the field with this message, "This have we found—know now whether it is your son's coat or no." And so we might send back, I think, to the nominal church, the black and blood-stained gown of the Inquisition, the garb of the headsman and the hangman, the smoke-browned raiment of those who lit the Smithfield fires, and even the parchments on which are written the Test and Corporation Acts and the Act of Uniformity and say, "Know now whether these are your sons' coats or no." Is the raiment of a man of war the vestment of a servant of the Lord? Are robes of legal authority the adornments of heralds of peace? Jesus Christ did not thus array His apostles when He sent them forth to war and not with such weapons did Paul arm himself when he entered the conflict.

"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal." Yet the spiritual weapons which can be wielded by the Christian minister and indeed by every Christian are not to be despised, for while not fleshy, they are mighty through God. God is in them. God is with those who use them. The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; the arrows of truth which pierce the consciences of men; the weapon of all-prayer; the influence of the Holy Spirit—that divine power—such weapons as these are by God's power made mighty to the overthrow of spiritual principalities and powers. Truth and holiness are the appointed engines for the pulling down of the castles of evil. Blessed is he who in every conflict for God takes heed to use none other weapons than those which the Lord has hung up in the tower of David built for an armory—wherein hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. Those only can fight the Lord's battles successfully who come to Him to be armed for the fight and reject all fleshy force. The spiritual shall be victorious, but others must fail.

The passage, if I were to confine it to its immediate connection, would represent Paul as dealing with those lofty ones who had usurped authority in the church at Corinth, who denied his apostleship, and set themselves up as superior to him while they themselves preached error and led the people astray. Paul declared that when he came among them armed with the power with which God had clothed him, he would overthrow every proud opposition and convince them all of the truth to their conversion or to their confusion. But I shall speak rather of a warfare carried on in individuals—a warfare in our own souls—for what is true of the triumphs of the gospel in the masses is true because it gains the same conquest over individuals. While I am speaking of the war of the gospel against sin within the heart of man, may you who have never felt its power be praying that it may conquer even you, and may those who have experienced its sacred omnipotence be pleading to be yet more completely subjugated to its sway—

"Great King of Grace, our hearts subdue,
May we be led in triumph, too,
As willing captives to our Lord,
To sing the victories of His word."

There are three things in the text worthy of our observation. The first is *fortresses demolished*, "casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God." Secondly, *prisoners seized,* "bringing into captivity every thought," and thirdly, *prisoners led away captive*—for such is the force of the Greek, "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"—as if the captured ones were taken away and put under new service to the anointed Prince.

I. First, let us look at FORTRESSES DEMOLISHED. When the gospel endeavors to penetrate the human heart, it meets with earthworks of prejudice which men have cast up to screen their minds from the force of the truth. Many things are opposed to the knowledge of God. The object sought for is that men may be brought to know God—to know who He is and what He is, to know their relation to Him as fallen men, to know His plan of restoration, to know Him in Christ Jesus, and so to know as to love Him, to obey Him, and to become like Him. This is the great object for which the gospel is sent into the world—that the knowledge of the glory of God may cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. But men desire not the knowledge of God's ways and shut up their hearts against the entrance of divine light by many reasonings and imaginings.

Some are garrisoned against the knowledge of God by the feeling that *they do not want to know God*. The masses of our fellow countrymen are not so much opposed to the gospel as indifferent to it. They pass by our places of worship and they see their neighbors entering and they sometimes say, "Who preaches there?" but "What is preached there?" is a question seldom asked. Religious inquiry seems to be very dull at the present time. Time was when the announcement of evangelical doctrine excited universal attention, though at the same time almost universal opposition—that opposition was better than a state of stagnation like the present. Men nowadays pass by the cross as if a dying Savior were nothing to them. Graceless zealots, as they call them, may fight about their creeds—as for them—they have something more practical to think about. "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? And how shall we be clothed?" are far more important questions to them than, "What must we do to be saved?" This entrenchment has to be carried and the gospel does carry it by the power of the Holy Spirit, for it flashes conviction on the soul, creates alarm, arouses apprehension, and so storms the stronghold of indifference and utterly demolishes it. When the Holy Spirit convinces a man of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come, he is indifferent no longer. We call him an "inquirer" and the name is correct, for he does inquire about the weightiest matters which concern eternity, God, heaven, hell, and his own immortal destiny. He wants to know, at first, more than he is, at that time, capable of learning. He questions about high mysteries which are for men in Christ rather than for babes, but most of all, he wants to know, "How can I be at peace with God?" If the Holy Spirit does but apply to a man's heart such a truth as this—that he is condemned already because he has not believed in Christ—then indifference is as a bulging wall and as a tottering fence. Even If a man had no other sin

whatsoever, it is quite sufficient to condemn him forever, that he neglects his God and turns away from his Savior, for unbelief is an act of high treason against the divine majesty, plucking at the crown jewel of Jehovah's truthfulness. Hence, "The wicked shall be turned into hell with all the nations that forget God." Lay this gun in a proper position and let it be fired by the Eternal Spirit against the indifference of the human heart and it soon casts down the wall of carelessness. Then the sinner discovers that if he does not know his God, it were better for him that he had never been born. He finds out that if he does not know his Savior, he is doomed to endless woe and this makes him cry out in anguish of heart, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Among the other "imaginations" with which man fortifies himself is the idea of many that *they know already*. Trained from their childhood in false doctrine, they hold fast to it and defy the gospel to reach them. They are Christians by birth, they say, forgetting the inspired declaration, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Others make up their minds as to what the knowledge of God ought to be and of course they quarrel with God's view of things. They fashion a god and a gospel after their own fond notions and then they dream that they have reached the summit of wisdom. They refuse to go to school to learn Christ and when He says, "Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God," they turn from Him with disdain. They know quite enough and are resolved to learn no more. A large proportion of our fellow men are in this condition and are perfectly content and satisfied to remain as they are. Graduates in the university of self-importance—full of ignorance and equally full of pride—they scarcely deign to give Christ a hearing and hardly go as far as the Athenians who said, "What will this babbler say?" Nothing shuts the heart more completely against the knowledge of God than the conceit that we already know and need no teaching from above. It is written of the true church, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord," but many are not such children, for they are wise in their own eyes and refuse instruction. But O sirs, how the Holy Spirit casts down this imagination when He makes men feel that they are blind by nature and lets them know that the natural man understands not the things which are of God, for they are spiritual and must be spiritually discerned. A little heavenly light suffices to reveal to men their darkness, for if they will but think they must admit that if God deigns to teach us in the Scriptures, it must be because apart from them we are ignorant. There is no need of revelation and the Bible is worthless; there is no need of an incarnate deity and Calvary is a superfluity if men already know God apart from the Lord Jesus and the Word by which He is pleased to reveal Himself. Let the Holy Spirit bring this home to a man's heart and he begins to cry out against his own pride. He bemoans his own blindness and he is quite willing to become a fool that he may be wise, a child that he may sit at Jesus' feet.

Another entrenchment, behind which many are securely hiding, is the idea that *if they do not know God they can find Him out without His help*. This is a very general notion nowadays. Scientific thought is supposed to be the way for finding out God Himself and the old Scripture is out of date which says," Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live." Plain truth is, in this wonderful century, of small account—men crave to be mystified by their own cogitations. Many glory in being too intellectual to receive anything as absolute certainty—they are not at all inclined to submit to the authority of a positive revelation. God's Word is not accepted by them as final, but they judge it and believe what they like of it. This is madness. I speak to those who believe in the Scriptures and I say if indeed there is a revelation, it becomes us to be silent before it and accept it without dispute. The Lord knows what He is better than we can ever know and if He has been pleased to speak in His Word plainly and solemnly, it is ours to believe what He says because He says it. It may be all very well to prove that such-and-such a revelation of God is consistent with reason, consistent with analogy, consistent with a thousand things—but the attitude which needs such argument is a spirit of rebellion against God. If there is a revelation, every part of it is of authority and must be believed. Human thought is not the arbiter of truth, but the infallible Word is the end of all strife. It is not ours to say what the truth must be or what we think it should be or what we would like it to be—but reverently to sit down with open ears and willing heart to receive what God has spoken. If an astronomer were to refuse to examine the stars and teach an astronomy invented in his own brain, he would be an idiot, and those who treat theology in the same fashion are not much better. "Surely," says one, "we ought to modify our beliefs by public opinion and the current of thought." I say, "NO," a thousand times. The incorruptible Word of God lives and abides forever and is incapable of modification. To modify is to adulterate and nullify and render it of no effect, so that it becomes another gospel and indeed no gospel. The thought of tampering with revealed truth is vicious and ought not to be tolerated by any Christian for a second. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not a thing which is to be molded according to the fashion of the period—it is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever." Whether the Greek philosophy rules or is exploded, whether some more modern theory blazes up or smolders down is small concern of ours, for we are set to preach the one unvarying gospel of Jesus Christ sent down with the Holy Spirit from heaven. No man was ever led to a saving faith by our meeting him half way and consenting to his unbelief. No real faith was ever worked in man by his own thoughts and imaginations—he must receive the gospel as a revelation from God or he cannot receive it at all. Faith is a supernatural work wherever it is found and if we think that we can beget faith in ourselves or others by the use of the fleshy weapons of philosophy, we shall certainly be foiled. The Scriptures pressed home by the Holy Spirit are God's power unto salvation and not men's cogitations and imaginations. There is the revealed gospel—reject it at your own peril. There is

Jehovah's revelation of Himself to men—receive it or be lost. This is the ground to go upon if we would speak as the oracles of God. God grant that proud thinkers may come upon this ground and become believers.

Here we are boldly met by some who say, "We do not want this doctrine which you call the 'knowledge of God.' *We know of something better already*. We tell you that your gospel, about which you make such a fuss, is outworn and done with." Treat it so, sirs, and perish, if you will, but as for us, we will mourn day and night over your unbelief. You will surely destroy your souls in rejecting the divine testimony, but in so doing you will prove that word to be true which says that the gospel is a savor of death unto death as well as of life unto life. You know better, you say, but how can this be? Do you know God better than God knows Himself? Do you know more about His way of reconciling men to Himself than His own Messenger, the Lord Jesus Christ, knows? Do you profess to know better than the Eternal Spirit who inspired the Scriptures? It is to those Scriptures that we crave your reverent attention and not to any assertions of ours—we pray you will not reject them. I heard one say the other day that he never felt any desire to pray and never had prayed in all his life. And though I looked at him with sorrow, I could only say to him, "Dead men never cry. You are dead in sin and so have not the divine breath. You have not been born-again. You have not a new nature or a right spirit—if you had, you could not help praying and believing." To me his statements were confirmations of Bible teaching concerning the real state of all unregenerate men. The gospel, as we have said before, wherever it creates faith begets it by its own power and by the power of the Eternal Spirit convincing men of the truth and enlightening those whom the Lord our God has chosen. Now, where the gospel comes, it undermines and overturns everything which opposes the truth of God and makes a man feel that of God he knows nothing until the Lord reveals it to him. Find a sinner made conscious of sin and you have found a man who does not know better than his God. Find a man with an awakened conscience and you have found a man who does not know better than his God. Find one who believes in Christ and sits at Jesus' feet and the more he learns the more surely have you found in him a man who does not know better than his God, but who still cries out to be taught more that he may possess to the full the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

There is yet another entrenchment behind which some hide themselves from the knowledge of God and that is, "I never can know. I do not know and I never can know. I despair of ever being able to know the Lord." In this despair the rebel entrenches himself as in a very cannon and becomes desperate in his resistance to the gospel. Yet even this rampart is cast down by mighty grace. When the Holy Spirit comes with the word of reconciliation, the sinner catches at the idea of atonement by a substitute. He is charmed by the truth, "I am lost in myself, but saved in Christ. I am in myself judged and condemned for sin, but in Christ I see my sin laid on another and put away." He catches at that truth, so

simple, so sublime, and as he believes it, he begins to know Him whom to know is life eternal. The Spirit of God, as He shines with light divine into the soul, soon sweeps away the Egyptian darkness of despair and in the light of God the man sees light.

You see what my drift is? It is just this, that there are certain walls of reasonings, reckonings, thinkings—our version calls them "imaginations"—which are to be cast down and the gospel does this when used by the Holy Spirit. Nor is this all, for with the walls the battlements fall. Man, having devised the fortress of reasoning, erects thereon towers of pride which the apostle calls "high things," of which he says that the power of God casts down "every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God." These lofty castles are such as the following—"I have a noble nature within me. My instincts are towards right. I have not done much amiss. I am as good as my neighbor. I can overcome any temptation. I am persuaded that I can fight my own way into eternal happiness," and all such vain ideas. Let but the gospel come with power and all these citadels are laid low. Away they go, like Jericho's old bulwarks, rocking and reeling till in a cloud of dust they thunder to their fall. In how many cases we have seen this to be so! Fine men have come into this place—men that knew a great deal better than anything they could find in the Bible—quite confident that nothing would ever alter them. These have sat down like ancient knights, mailed from head to foot, invulnerable to any shafts of ours—but the blessed Spirit has found an arrow in some simple saying that we have gathered from God's blessed Word and lo, the proud warriors have fallen in the dust. Convinced that they were ignorant and foolish, the formerly proud boasters have begun to cry, "What must we do to be saved?" And before long, being made champions of the faith, it has been their delight to humbly yield judgment, will and heart to the obedience of Christ. O that the Lord would thus storm the prejudices and self-conceits of all my unconverted hearers and sweep them away by His mighty love.

II. After a breach has been made and the city has been taken, PRISONERS ARE MADE. This is our second point. The text runs thus, "Bringing into captivity every thought." The word translated, "thought," has a very broad meaning, but its best explanation is that which is placed first in the lexicon, "Everything which comes from the mind." The mind is like a city and when it is captured, the inhabitants which swarm its streets are the thoughts and these are taken prisoners. Look at the process which I will rapidly describe. The gospel comes with power to the heart of a man and he begins to fear the wrath of God and the judgment to come. See how he trembles. Christ has captured his thoughts of self-security. He no more says, "Though I add drunkenness to thirst, it shall surely be well with me." On the contrary he cries, "I am guilty. I have broken God's law and I am condemned." The Lord has captured his thoughts of self-righteousness. This is the man who yesterday boasted in himself that he was righteous. The pure and holy law of God has come near his conscience and he feels himself guilty and therefore cries for mercy. Now he

begins to pray, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." And it is clear that his thoughts of independence, his ideas that he could do without his God, are made prisoners. His thoughts of pleasure in alienation from the Great Father are now slain, for he desires to draw near to the Most High. See! A little hope begins to dawn. He hopes that there may be salvation for him. His thoughts of rebellious despair are led captive in fetters of iron. Praise the Lord! Watch him further. The Spirit of God encourages him and he comes to believe in Jesus—his self-trust is a prisoner. That Jesus died for sinners is a truth which now he accepts and he casts himself upon it—his proud intellect is a captive and he gladly bows at the Redeemer's feet. Hear him as he sings, "I am forgiven. God assures me of it. I am justified because I have believed in Jesus. Oh, how I love His precious name." His inmost heart is captured—all the thoughts of his love are now subdued and the Savior whom he once despised, he now adores. See how with gratitude he brings his alabaster box to break it and pour the sweet perfume on the Savior's feet. Jesus has won his heart and holds it in a willing captivity and henceforth the man consecrates himself to Christ—to live and to die for Him. Thus the whole mind of the man, yes, the whole man, has thrown down its rebellious weapons and surrendered unconditionally to the conquering arm of the Lord Jesus.

I dwell very briefly upon this point because I wish to enlarge upon the last.

III. These prisoners are to be LED AWAY INTO CAPTIVITY, "Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Monarchs of the olden times, such as the kings of Assyria and Babylon, when they subdued a country, removed the people to a distance away from their old haunts to find new homes. Now, when the Lord captivates the thoughts of our mind, He leads them away, conducting them to another reason altogether. The offspring of the mind He guides into the spiritual realm wherein they delight in the Lord and bow themselves before Him. Let us see this procession of captives led away to grace the triumph of the conqueror and to settle them down in another region under another King than they ever knew before. From the highest to the lowest, all the faculties of the soul are made to pass under the yoke—I shall not attempt a list according to mental science, but mention them as they occur to me. He who, being made conscious of his sin, believes in Jesus Christ submits all the thoughts of his judgment and understanding to the obedience of Christ and this is a great point gained. Before he put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness—but now, when he is in difficulty about a moral question he asks his Lord. Now, if pleasure tempts him, he judges whether it is sweet by the question whether it would be sweet to his Lord. Now, if a certain doctrine is stated, he weighs it not in the balances of his own thoughts, much less in the scales of popular opinion, but he asks, "What did my Master say? What would the Lord Jesus think of this?" He suspends his own judgment upon his Master's judgment. He does not say, "I am a law unto myself," but he says, "Christ is the way and in His steps I desire to follow."

Thus his reason is led into captivity into the higher reason and understanding of his supreme Lord. If there is a truth which he does not know, he tries to learn it. If his Lord sets it before him as a lesson and if it is hidden from him, he is content not to know. His prayer is, "Lord, teach me, for else I shall never learn. I wish to have my understanding developed to the full, but let it be under Your sweet light. Let my mind blossom and open all its flowers beneath the sunlight of Your divine instruction." I know it is not so with some professed Christians, for they too often invent their own doctrines and think out their opinions apart from their Master. To think is admirable, but not if we mean thereby to supplement the teachings of Christ or to improve upon them or to accommodate them to popular theories in science and philosophy. For my part, true science may say what it will and never lack for an attentive listener while I live—the more loudly it shall speak the better—if it will speak facts and not theories—if it will tell me what God has done and not what man has dreamed. All that true science ever can discover must tally with the Word of revelation, for God speaks in nature nothing but the self-same truth as He has written in the Holy Scriptures. Let our wise men ransack earth to its center and climb to heaven and make inquisition through every star—the testimony of universal nature, if heard aright, shall never contradict the inspired utterances of the Holy Spirit. The evil is that the wise men add their own inferences to the facts as if they were of equal authority. What, then, is to be done? Shall we alter the deductions of the fallible or try to shape the declarations of the infallible? The question is not hard to answer. We are not to revise the statements of the Book, but the inferences of the philosophers. When philosophy contradicts revelation, what say I? So much the worse for philosophy. In spite of the perpetual restlessness which I see in many who are forever mending that which is perfect in itself, my understanding is happy to delight in the infallible testimonies of Jehovah. Let those fellows alter—we shall not! Let them come up to us—verily, believers in God's revelation will never go down to them, for that would be to be disloyal to our Master, Christ, whose teachings are too sacred for us to knowingly alter a letter of them. Whatever others may do, it is the delight of those who have felt the overwhelming power of the divine Spirit to find in Christ the wisdom with which their intellect is more than content.

The same power of truth and of the Holy Spirit leads captive the will. My Lord Will-Be-Will, as Bunyan describes him, is a very stout fellow. Some men think he is exceedingly obstinate, "I will and I will, and I will," and by no means can they be made to yield. In truth, the will has a wonderful power over all the faculties and rules them like a despot. It is boasted that the will of man is free, yet was Luther quite correct when he called it a slave. Never is it so much a slave as when it brags of its own liberty. Let the Spirit of God come into the heart and apply with power the gospel of Jesus Christ—and the human will no longer glories in its freedom, but surrenders and is subjugated. It remains a will still, but the will of God is supreme over it. Hear it describe itself, "Lord, this is my will

or what I want to be my will. 'Not as I will, but as You will.'" See how the will wears its golden fetters and kisses them with happy lips, so glad to find true freedom in being subdued to the obedience of Christ.

It is also very beautiful to see how human *hopes* are spell-bound by grace. These winged things were known to flutter no higher than the tainted atmosphere of this poor world—but now they find stronger pinions and soar aloft to things not seen as yet, eternal in the heavens. The man's *fears*, too, all nestled in the ruins of his sinful joys, were aroused by the voices of his fellow man, but now, ennobled by grace, they ascend into another sphere. They cover their faces with their wings before the throne of God, while the man fears to grieve the Holy Spirit, fears to offend against the Father's love, fears to do anything which would dishonor the Savior. His joys and sorrows are now found where they never went before—he rejoices in the Lord and he sorrows after a godly sort. His *memory* also now retains the precious things of divine truth, which once it rejected for the trifles of time. His *powers of meditation* and consideration keep within the circle of truth and holiness, finding green pastures there. This done, you shall see the same enthrallment cast over the Christian man's *desires and aspirations*. He has flung away his old ambitions and aspires to nobler things. He is not without his longings, but he longs for heavenly blessings. His wishes and desires to fly to Christ as doves to their windows. His affection, which is no longer set upon things upon the earth, but on things above, draws upward his desires. He pines for holiness, for usefulness, for the glory of God. His own glory he discards and is willing to be of no repute so long as he may but make the name of Jesus famous among the sons of men. I would to God, dear brothers and sisters, that this sacred vassalage would be more fully felt by every motion of the mind so that no desire would dare to wander beyond bounds even for a moment.

The same blessed servitude binds the man's *plots and designs*. He plans still, but it is not for his own aggrandizement—his grandest design is to bring jewels to the crown of Christ. He arranges his life now with circumspection and with diligence—but not with cunning and craftiness—for holiness is his policy and his scheme of life is sanctity. Does not this talk of mine sound rather like sarcasm to some who profess to be Christians? If it does, stand convicted, for it is not I that am wrong in this, but you—for every thought is to be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and even when we are thinking about common things, matters that have to do with business, we are to be serving our Lord, for "every thought," not some thought, is to be bowed unto the obedience of Christ. It is a wicked error to conceive that so much of our life ought to be religious and so much to be secular. A Christian's whole life is to be his religion and his religion is to saturate his whole life. You are as religiously to eat your meals as you eat at the sacred supper, as religiously to speak the truth in your parlor as you would in the pulpit. Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, it is all to be done to the glory of God. The great thought you are to have in opening your shops, in

trading, in toiling, in furnishing your houses, in nursing your children, and even in taking recreation, is still to be, "How can I glorify God in all this?" All, all must be brought into captivity to Christ. When a man yields himself to Jesus, he should comprehend his house, his money, his body, his time, his wife, his children—everything in the deed of surrender—for He who bought us with His precious blood did not buy us with a reserve and leave the devil a mortgage upon us, but we are our Lord's unencumbered freehold forever. We are His own conquered portion which He took out of the hand of the Amorite with His sword and with His bow and therefore, over the whole of our being He has an absolute and undivided right of property.

The renewed man's *love and hate* are both held captive by the power of grace. He loves Jesus truly and intensely. He hates sin with his whole soul. Indignation is a hard thing to tame, but to my mind it is a grand thing to see a man's anger made the servitor of Christ so that he only grows indignant when he wars with that which is mean, cruel, unjust, un-Christlike. Then he does well to be angry, for his anger is but virtue on a blaze. It is a fair sight to see Christ's sacred bands worn by our tastes which are so volatile and hard to constrain. Concerning tastes, it is never wise to dispute, but Jesus' love creates a delicacy of mind, a discernment of that which is tender and gentle, and pure and heavenly—an abhorrence of that which is evil so that the Lord's redeemed become very connoisseurs in things moral and divine. *The fancy,* too—that intangible cloud painted as by the setting sun, that will-of-the-wisp of the spirit—even this is impressed into royal service and made to wear the colors of Christ so that men even dream eternal life. When godly men give their imagination rein, even Pegasus bears a royal burden and in his flight from the actual to the imaginative, he feels the golden bridle of the King's rule restraining and directing all his airy motions. Yes, the Holy Spirit wins an undisputed sway, "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Do you not wish for this complete subjection, you to whom Jesus is God and Lord? I know you do and what is more, I am sure you wish for the time when that which is worked in yourselves shall be accomplished in all mankind. Christ's gospel has not come into the world to be co-equal with other faiths and share a divided kingdom with differing creeds. False gods may stand face to face to each other in one Pantheon and be at peace, for they are all false together, but where Christ comes, Dagon must go down—not even the stump of him must stand. Truth is of necessity intolerant of falsehood. Love wars with hate and justice battles with wrong. Christ Jesus will be all in all and sit upon the throne alone. May the day come in which obedience to Christ shall be universal. What a scene would present itself if every thought of every human being were in holy subjection to Christ! Not a poor woman would muse beneath her lowly roof of thatch without rendering holy adoration—while on the throne, neither queen nor prince would plan anything but what should be for the glory of Jesus. No council chamber would know a policy which

would be contrary to the Prince of love, nor would the freest thinker think anything contrary to the thoughts of Jesus. The wild men of the plain would cease to forget the Lord and the civilized dwellers in cities would no longer cast off His fear. The common people would seek unto Him in multitudes and the nobles would study how to honor Him. How happy will the time be when all inventive genius shall own the sway of Jesus and man shall desire no more to fashion weapons of war, but only to design that which shall minister to the well-being of mankind. When art with pencil and chisel shall refrain from all which excites lascivious thoughts and perpetuates the memory of blood and slaughter and shall bow at Jesus' feet to honor God by setting nature's beauties before reverent eyes, when learning, poring over its classic books, shall find in human wisdom trophies for the surer wisdom of Jesus, and study, searching by the midnight lamp, shall seek out the heights and depths of divine love. It charms me to think of every poet singing divine songs for earth's great King, drinking no more from the Castellan fountain, but finding all their springs in God alone. Then, too, shall music compose her most harmonious symphonies and pour forth her richest notes in worship of the redeeming Lord, while eloquence, no longer declaiming in the defense of wrong, shall spend her force in the maintenance of peace and righteousness and in the extolling of the Lord. Dawn even now, auspicious day. Why hangs the night so heavy? Why bides the darkness around us for so many ages?

Great Captain of salvation, You can achieve the victory. We have compassed this Jericho these many days, but still the walls have not fallen. Up, You mighty man of war, for You are such, and come to the battle and then the battlements of sin will fall. "The Lord is a man of war: Jehovah is His name." Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord. Awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Are You not He that has cut Rahab and wounded the dragon? Because of truth and righteousness, ride forth in Your majesty. For peace on earth and glory to God in the highest, come forth in the glory of Your might with the everlasting gospel, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

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THE MIDDLE PASSAGE
NO. 1474

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 18, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

(In commemoration of the completion of the 25th year of his Ministry over the church Meeting in the Tabernacle).

"O Lord, I have heard Your speech, and was afraid; O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy."
Habakkuk 3:2.

HABAKKUK had the sadness of living at a time when true religion was in a very deplorable state. The nation had to a great extent departed from the living God. There was a godly party in the kingdom, but the ungodly and idolatrous faction was exceedingly strong. The Lord threatened judgment on the people on account of this and it was revealed to the prophet that an invasion by the Chaldeans was near at hand. The prophet, therefore, was filled with anxiety as to the future of his country because he saw its sinful condition and knew where it must end. The book of his prophecy begins with the earnest question of intercession, "O Lord, how long?" His spirit was stirred within him at the sin of the people and his heart was broken by a vision of the chastisement which the Lord had ordained. It becomes all who bear witness for God to thus be stirred in soul when they see the name of God dishonored and have reason to expect the visitations of His wrath. A man without a heart of compassion is not a man of God.

Yet Habakkuk was a man of strong faith, a happy circumstance indeed for him in evil times, for if faith be wanted in the fairest weather, much more is it needed when the storm is gathering. And if the just must live by faith even when the morning begins to break, how much more must they do so when the shadows are deepening into night? Those who have tender hearts to weep over the sins of their fellows need also brave hearts to stay themselves upon God.

Habakkuk's name, by interpretation, is the embracer and I may say of him truly that he was one who saw the promises afar off and was persuaded of them and embraced them. He took fast hold upon the goodness of the Lord and rested there. In reading his book, one is struck by the way in which he realized the presence of God. Fitly does he entitle his book, "The burden which Habakkuk the prophet *did see,"* for in the vividness of his apprehension, he is eminently a "seer." He perceives the presence of God and bids the earth keep silence before Him. He beholds the divine ways in the history of the chosen people and feels rottenness entering into his bones and a trembling seizing him. God was very real to him and the way of God was very conspicuous before his mental eye. Hence his faith was as vigorous as his reverence was deep. It is in his

prophecy that we read that wonderful gospel sentence upon which Paul preaches many sermons, "The just shall live by faith"—and it is in this prophecy too that we find that notable resolution of faith when under the worst conceivable circumstances, she says or sings, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the 'God of my salvation.'" Now, beloved, it will be well for us if we have much of Habakkuk's spirit and are grounded and settled by a strong confidence in God; for if so, while we may have somber views both as to the present and the future, we shall be freed from all despondency by casting ourselves upon Him whose ways are everlasting. His goings forth of old were so grand and glorious that to doubt Him is to slander Him. His nature is so unchangeable that to reckon upon the repetitions of His gracious deeds is but to do Him the barest justice.

In the text which I have selected this morning with an eye to the celebration of the 25th year of our happy union as pastor and people, I see three points upon which I wish to dwell. The first is, *the prophet's fear,* "O Lord, I have heard Your speech and was afraid." The second is *the prophet's prayer,* "O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known." And the third is *the prophet's plea,* "In wrath remember mercy," coupled with the rest of the chapter in which he practically finds a plea for God's present working in the report of what He had done for Israel in the olden times.

I. First, then, I want you to NOTICE THE PROPHET'S FEAR, "I have heard Your speech and was afraid." It is the fear of solemn awe—it is not dread or terror, but reverence. Read it in connection with the 20th verse of the preceding chapter, "But the Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him. O Lord, I have heard Your speech and was afraid." All else was hushed and then, in the solemn silence, he heard Jehovah's voice and trembled. It is not possible that mortal men should be thoroughly conscious of the divine presence without being filled with awe. I suppose that this feeling in unfallen Adam was less overwhelming because he had no sense of sin, but surely even to him it must have been a solemn thing to hear the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. Though filled with a childlike confidence, yet even innocent manhood must have shrunk to the ground before that majestic presence. Since the fall, whenever men have been favored with any special revelation of God, they have been deeply moved with fear. There was great truth in the spirit of the old tradition that no man could see God's face and live, for such a sense of nothingness is produced in the soul by consciousness of Deity that men so highly favored have found themselves unable to bear up under the load of blessing. Isaiah cries, "Woe is me. For I am undone; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Daniel says, "There remained no strength in me." Ezekiel declares, "When I saw it, I fell upon my face." And John confesses, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." You remember how Job cried unto the Lord, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Angels, who climb the ladder which Jacob saw, veil their faces when they look on

God, and as for us who are at the foot of that ladder, what can we do but say with the patriarch, "How dreadful is this place"? Albeit that it is the greatest of all blessings, yet is it an awful thing to be a favorite with God. Blessed among women was the Virgin Mother, to whom the Lord manifested such high favor, but for this very reason to her it was foretold, "Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul also." Blessed among men was he to whom God spoke as a friend, but it was necessary that a horror of great darkness should come upon him. It is not given to such frail creatures as we are to stand in the full blaze of Godhead, even though it is tempered by the mediation of Christ, without crying out with the prophet, "I was afraid." "Who would not fear You, O King of nations?"

Habakkuk's awe of God was quickened by the "speech" which he had heard. "O Lord, I have heard Your speech," which is by some rendered, "report," and referred to the gospel of which Isaiah says, "Who has believed our report?" But surely the meaning should rather be looked for in the context and this would lead us to interpret the "report" as relating to what God had done for His ancient people when He came from Teman, cleaving the earth with rivers and threshing the heathen in anger. The prophet had been studying the history of Israel and had seen the hand of God in every stage of that narrative—from the passage of the Red Sea and the Jordan on to the casting out of the heathen and the settlement of Israel in Canaan. He had heard the speech of God in the story of Israel in the silence of his soul. He had seen the deeds of the Lord as though newly enacted and he was filled with awe and apprehension, for he saw that while God had great favor for His people, yet He was provoked by their sins. And though He passed by their transgressions many and many a time, yet He did chasten them and did not wink at their iniquities. The prophet remembered how God had smitten Israel in the wilderness till the graves of lust covered many an acre of the desert. He remembered how He had smitten them in Canaan, where tyrant after tyrant subdued them and brought them very low. He remembered the terrible judgments which the Lord had sent, one after another, thick and threefold upon His guilty people, fulfilling that ancient word of His, "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities." He saw that burning text, "I the Lord your God am a jealous God," written in letters of fire all along the history of Jehovah's connection with His elect people and so he cried, "O Lord, I have heard Your speech and was afraid."

Probably, however, Habakkuk alludes to another source of apprehension, namely, the silent speech of God within his prophetic bosom, where, unheard by men, there were intimations of coming vengeance which intimations he afterwards put into words and left on record in the first chapter of his book. The Chaldeans, a people fierce and strong were coming up. They were a bitter and hasty nation, terrible and dreadful, swifter than leopards and fiercer than evening wolves. These were hastening towards Judah as mighty hunters hurry to the prey and in the spirit of prophecy; Habakkuk saw the land parched beneath the firehoofs of the invading horses, princes and kings led away into captivity, the garden of the Lord turned into a desolate wilderness, and Lebanon itself shorn of its forests by the hand of violence. The fear of this frightful

calamity made him tremble; as well it might, for Jeremiah himself scarcely found tears enough to bewail the Chaldean woe. Now, my brethren, when the Lord leads His servants to look from their watchtowers and to guess the future by the past, we also are afraid. When we see God's chastisement of a sinful people in years gone by and are led therefrom to prognosticate the probable future of a sinful people in the present day, and then do our hearts fail us for fear lest the Lord should avenge Himself upon the guilty nation in which we dwell. We are afraid for ourselves also with great fear, for we also have sinned.

Thus, you see, the prophet's fear was made up of these three things—first, a solemn awe inspired by the near presence of the Lord who cannot look upon iniquity, lest haply He should break forth upon the people as a consuming fire. Secondly, an apprehension drawn from the past report of God's ways which He had made known to Moses and His acts to the children of Israel, lest He should again smite the erring nation. And then, thirdly, a further apprehension which projected itself into the future, that the Lord would execute the threatenings which He had so solemnly uttered by His prophets and permit the Chaldeans to treat His people as though they were so many fishes of the sea to be taken in their net and devoured.

Putting those three things together, I advance to the prophet's special subject of fear which has been generally overlooked but is very conspicuous in the text. The prophet was afraid because of the particular period of national life through which his people were passing. They had come, if I read his prayer aright, to "the midst of the years," or the middle period of their history. Habakkuk's ministry was not exercised in the first ages when Moses and Samuel prophesied, nor yet in these latter days wherein we live, upon whom the ends of the earth have come. He probably ministered 600 years before the coming of Christ—somewhere in the very center of human history—if that history is to make a week of thousands as to its years as many have imagined. With regard to the Israelite people, they were now far removed from the day "when Ephraim was a child." They were in their middle life when the best things ought to have been developed in them. The heroic age was gone and that unpoetical, matter of fact era was come in which men labored in the very fire and wearied themselves for very vanity and therefore like a tender intercessor, the prophet cries, "O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known." The application to ourselves which I want to make this morning is drawn from the fact that we also as a church have reached "the midst of the years." Under the present pastorate we are like mariners in mid ocean, distant 25 leagues, or rather years, from the place of our departure and making all sail for the further shore. As to any service we may expect personally to render, we are certainly in the midst of the years if not near to their end. In the course of nature, we could not expect that more than another 25 years of service could be compassed by us [Brother Spurgeon died January 6, 1892, less than 13 years later.—eod], nor are we so foolish as to reckon even upon that. We have, at any rate, come to middle life in our church relationship now that we celebrate our silver anniversary.

Brethren, there is about "the midst of the years" a certain special danger and this led the prophet, as it shall lead us at this time, to pray, "O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known." Youth has its perils, but these are past. Age has its infirmities, but these we have not yet reached. It is ours then to pray against the dangers which are present with us "in the midst of the years." The middle passage of life with us as individuals and with us as a church is crowded with peculiar perils.

Have you never noticed how previous dispensations have all passed away in their prime, long before they had grown grey with years? Upon the golden age of paradise and perfection the sun went down before it was yet noon. The patriarchal period saw a few of its hoary fathers wearing the veneration of centuries, but in a few generations men with lengthened lives had grown so skilled in sin that the flood came and swept away the age before yet it had begun to fade. Then came the Jewish state with its judges and its kings—and scarcely have we read that Solomon built a great house for the Lord before we perceive that Israel has gained the zenith of her glory and her excellence declines. Even so was it in the Christian church of the first ages, so far as it was a visible organization. It began well—what did hinder it? It was in fullest health and strength when it defied the lions and the flames and laughed emperors to scorn, but before long Constantine laid his royal hand upon it and the church became sick of the king's evil—the cruelest of all diseases to the church of God. This malady, like a canker, ate into her very heart and defiled her soul so that what should have been a spiritual empire chastely wedded to the Lord Christ became the mistress of the kings of the earth. Her middle ages were a night of darkness which even yet casts its dread shade across the nations. It seems as if the middle passage of communities cannot be safely passed except by a miracle of grace. The morning comes with a dawn of bright beams and sparkling dews, but before long the sun is hot and the fields are parched or the sky is black with clouds and the glory of the day is marred. This is a matter of constant anxiety to the lover of his race who knows the jealousy of God and the frailty of His people, lest in the midst of the years the people should turn aside from their faithfulness and forget their first love and therefore the Lord should be provoked to remove their candlestick and leave them to their own devices. O Lord, my God, grant this may not happen unto this Your church.

What, then, are the dangers of this middle passage?

First, there is a certain spur and stimulus of novelty about religious movements which in a few years is worn out. I well remember when we were called, "a nine days wonder," and our critics prophesied that our work would speedily collapse. Such excitement had been before and had passed away—and this would be one among other bubbles of the hour. The nine days have lasted considerably longer—may nine such days follow them in God's infinite mercy. Now, whatever detractors might say, we know that there was then a life, an energy, a freshness about everything which was done by us as a church which we could hardly expect to continue with us for all these years. Youthful novelty has certainly gone and the danger is that a community should be greatly weakened by the ceas-

ing of that force which in some cases has been all the power possessed. Lady Huntingdon, in a letter to Mr. Berridge, deplored the fact that every new work, after a season, seemed to grow lifeless. Berridge remarked that in this the primitive churches were much like our own and that after the former rain which falls at seed-time, there is often a dry interval until the latter rain descends. I fear the good man's remark is sadly correct. From an admirable fervor, many cool down to a dangerous chill. This is to be bemoaned where it has occurred and it is to be feared where, as yet it has not happened, for such is the natural tendency of things. Beloved brethren, I have prayed to God that when what is called the *esprit de corps* is gone from us, the Esprit de Dieu may still abide with us. I have prayed that when the spirit which grows out of our association with each other declines, we may be sustained by the Spirit which unites us all to the Lord Jesus.

The middle passage becomes difficult, then, because things grow ordinary and commonplace which before were striking and remarkable. I do not know that this would matter much if it were not too often the case that with the stimulus of novelty certain other excitements also vanish. We tremble lest the people who prayed mightily at first should restrain prayer before the Lord, lest those who made many self-sacrifices should think that they have done enough, and lest those who have consecrated themselves unto the Lord should imagine that they began upon too high a key and cannot keep up the music to such a pitch. A people, who have loved the souls of men and have been like mighty hunters before the Lord after sinners, may suddenly dream that they are excused from further effort and may leave others to do mission work for their Lord. It is an ill day when a feeling of satisfaction begins to creep over us, but this is one of the perils of "the midst of the years." I pray the reliance on God in which we began should never depart from us.

It often happens in the commencement of religious movements that men are weak and few and feeble and despised and they trust in God and so they grow strong, but their strength becomes their overthrow. The tendency of our proud nature is to cease from childlike confidence in God when once it feels strong enough to rely upon itself. The Lord says not by many nor by few—and if even for a moment we should glory in our numbers and think that now we are powerful for the achievement of any work which we may undertake, we shall grieve the Spirit of God and He may in holy jealousy leave us to barrenness. This is to be dreaded beyond all things. My brethren, it is a glorious thing to be weak that we may have the strength of God resting on us. It is a glorious thing to be poor and mean and despised that the Lord may take such weak instruments and get unto Himself glory by the use of them. But it is a grievous evil if in the mid-day of prosperity, the church should vex the Spirit of God by self-confidence and cause Him to withdraw His sacred succors.

Another danger arises out of the pride of achievement. When men are beginning to work for Christ, they feel that they cannot do anything without Him and they trust in God to give them strength and He answers their humble cry and does great things by them. But when a good work is worked, we are apt to feel, "We have won our laurels. We have borne the burden and the heat of the day and we may now rest." This is fatal to

progress. We shall do no more when we imagine that we have done enough. You know the story of the painter who broke his palette and put down his brush and told his wife that he would never paint again for the artistic faculty had departed from him? When she inquired how he was aware of the sad fact, he answered, "The last picture I produced realized my ideal and satisfied me and therefore I am certain that I have lost my power as a painter." It certainly is so that we are fit for Christ's service only as long as we feel that we have as yet done nothing and are merely at the beginning of our purposed service. Those who pine for greater exploits have not yet spent themselves, but the danger lies in saying, "I have finished my day's work. Soul, take your ease." From my heart I dread the middle hour of life's day, both for myself and you, for therein so many think it no ill, like the Italians, to take a *siesta,* or mid-day sleep, and then it is that the enemy is upon them.

There is too a pride of experience which is apt to grow upon churches and individuals, like moss upon old trees, when men are "in the midst of the years." They feel, "We are not now the young, simple, silly people that we once were. We are not now to be overcome by temptation or misled by error. We shall beyond all doubt remain sound in faith and pure in life even to the end." It is from the egg of carnal security that the canker worm of backsliding is hatched—therefore we must mind what we are doing "in the midst of the years."

Besides, I think, dear brethren, all Christians must be conscious that after a continuance in doing well we are apt to be assailed by weariness. Apart from our Lord's promised aid, we faint—we die in the long race which He has set before us. Labor leads to lassitude and suffering to impatience. Grace is needed to prevent the decays of nature. When the natural spirits sink, we grow depressed and complain that our warfare is hard and our travail bitter, and with this there is apt to mingle a sense of disappointment because we have not achieved all that our sanguine hopes expected. We scarcely rejoice that something has been done because so much remains unaccomplished. When the mind is thus wearied, the spirit faints at the prospect of a further and perhaps a heavier strain—and this makes the central regions of life wonderfully trying to Zion's pilgrims. We are apt to be slack in the service of God by reason of what we have already done, though that we must confess is little enough. Satan knows how to take advantage of our fainting moments—to make cowards of us if he can. Therefore, be aware of his devices.

If we have stood like watchmen on the walls for years, the tendency is to relax our vigilance. If we have borne a protest for many years, the thought will suggest itself that it will be folly to be singular any longer and wise to yield to the current of the times. Then the enemy sneeringly whispers, "Who are you and what have you done with all your testifying and separate walking and Puritanical precisions? All that you have accomplished is insignificant enough! The world still lies in the wicked one and error is still rampant. Give up the battle, for you cannot win." In the midst of the years, what with weariness and lack of faith, the heart is apt to yield to the infernal suggestion. Therefore, brethren, let a mighty prayer go up from the whole church to our Redeemer God, "O Lord, revive

Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known."

II. Thus have I indicated the prophet's fear and now I would conduct you, secondly, to consider THE PROPHET'S PRAYER, "O Lord, revive Your work." His first request is for *revival*. He means, "Lord, put new life into us. Your cause began with life, but the tendency of all around it is to make it die, therefore, Lord, quicken it anew, give it another birthday and restore all the force and energy of its first love. Give us a new Pentecost, we beseech You. Give all the spiritual endowments which came with the tongues of fire and so enrich us anew. Revive us! Help us to begin again. Start us anew in life." That is the petition and it seems to me to be one of the wisest requests that ever fell even from prophetic lips. Let us use it. Lord, now that we have been 25 years together, let us feel as fresh as if the race were now beginning. Give us back the dew of our youth that we may do our first works and something more. Let us have with the maturity of age the freshness of youth. And let us run without weariness in Your ways because Your Spirit has quickened us. Our dependence is upon You, even for life itself. Breathe on us once more.

And that life, as I understand it, is to come upon God's people themselves, "Revive Your work." What is God's work? Why, it is God's people, for we are His workmanship. True revival must first come upon the churches themselves. In all churches, there is much that is not God's work and we do not ask to have it revived, but rather that it may be put away. But wherever there is anything that is God's work—any of the mind of Christ, any sincere prayer, any faith, any hope, any love, any consecration—we earnestly cry, "O Lord, revive Your work." Living saints alone are, in the exact sense of the word, capable of revival—we can only revive those in whom life is already found. O Lord, quicken Your people!

He means God's work in each one of us, for we each need revival—may the Lord send it to us now so that if grey hairs are upon us here and there, and we know it not, we may become young again through His free Spirit. If the fountain of our life runs low, may the Lord touch the secret springs and flood us again with holy zeal. To save us from the perils of "the midst of the years" we need to have life anew imparted to us.

But the prophet also refers to God's work *by* His people as well as in them. May the Lord put new life into His cause. It is an awful thing to see a dead church. I have seen such a thing with my own eyes. I remember very well preaching in a chapel where the church had become exceedingly low and somehow the very building looked like a sepulcher, though crowded that one night by those who came to hear the preacher. The singers drawled out a dirge while the members sat like mutes. I found it hard preaching—there was no go in the sermon—I seemed to be driving dead horses. After the sermon I saw two deacons, the pillars of the church, leaning against the posts of the vestry door in a listless attitude and I said, "Are you the deacons of this church?" They informed me that they were the only deacons and I remarked that I thought so. To myself I added that I understood, as I looked at them, several things which otherwise would have been a riddle. Here was a dead church comparable to the ship of the ancient mariner which was manned by the dead. Dea-

cons, teachers, minister, people—all dead—and yet wearing the semblance of life—

"The helmsman steered, the ship moved on,
Yet never a breeze up blew;
The mariners all began to work the ropes,
Where they were known to do.
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools
We were a ghastly crew."

May the Lord save us from becoming such a ghastly crew. Now, to prevent our getting into that state, and we easily may—so that instead of devotion there shall be routine and instead of life and energy there shall be dead orthodoxy and dull propriety—we must cry, "O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years."

The prophet further asks for a fresh revelation of the Lord, "In the midst of the years make known." When You have made us live, then shall we have power to know and therefore make Your truth known to us. Did he not intend by this petition that the Lord should make known that the work was His own? "Revive Your work; in the midst of the years make known," that men may not say, "This was only an excitement which the spirit of the people carried on for a few years," but may be forced to confess that this is the finger of God because it continues and abides. O Lord, in our case make the world know that it is Your work because You do not forsake it. Again convert multitudes, build up the church again, increase the people again, multiply the joy again, pour out the Holy Spirit upon Your witnesses again with signs following.

But I think he chiefly means make known Yourself. In the midst of the years make known Yourself, O Jehovah. Reveal in the midst of Your church, Your power to save. Make known the person and sacrifice of the Well-beloved in whom Your grace and vengeance strangely join. Make known the power of the Holy Spirit who convinces of sin and afterwards comforts by leading the sinner to the cross. Make known Yourself, Eternal Father, as You receive prodigals into Your bosom and kiss them with the kiss of love and make high festival concerning their return to You. The prophet longed that God would be seen in the midst of His people and this above all things is our hearts' desire. Oh, my brethren, it is vain and idle for us to think that any good can come of human speech or human song or human worship of any kind apart from God Himself being there. There must be supernatural power put forth or men will never turn from darkness to light, nor rise from death to life. What is the church worth if the Lord is not known in the midst of her? Write Ichabod upon her walls, for the glory has departed when her God has gone.

The prophet virtually prays that God would do for His church again what He did for her in the olden times. We have just read the whole chapter—what a wonderful poem it is! We can only in a very prosaic way condense its meaning. First, with the prophet, we exult in the manifestation of the divine glory. "His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise, and His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His hands." Thus was Jehovah seen and our heart's prayer is, "Lord, show Yourself in this way again. Once more display Your glory. Stretch out Your hand which has the horns of power going forth out of it.

Exalt Yourself in the conversion and the salvation of men that the multitude may see how glorious is the Lord our God."

Observe how the prophet speaks of God's power against His enemies. The Midianites came up upon Israel in such numbers that, like grasshoppers, they could not be counted. But the Lord smote them and utterly cut them off. Hear how the prophet describes their overthrow, "I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble." And well they might, when Jehovah came forth to smite them. Now our prayer is that the Lord would shine forth so gloriously in the midst of His church that the powers of superstition and skepticism may be made to tremble at His presence. I have looked upon their tents wherein I have seen them multiplying their idols and their gods. I have looked upon their curtains within which they have spoken proud words of carnal wisdom against the Most High and my heart has said, "Let the Lord dwell in the midst of His people and manifest His power as in former ages and these tents shall be in affliction and utterly pass away." Moreover, the prophet sees all nature and providence subservient to God and so he grandly sings, "Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? Was Your anger against the rivers? Was Your wrath against the sea that You did ride upon Your horses and Your chariots of salvation?"

If God is with His people, all things are on their side—the stars in the heavens fight for them—the wheels of everlasting providence full of eyes revolve with watchful wisdom, working out purposes of benediction. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." And all this, the prophet says, was done for the saving of His people. Pharaoh and his horses were drowned in the sea, but as for Jehovah, when He went to save His people, the seas could not overwhelm Him, "You did walk through the sea with Your horses, through the heap of great waters." Can you not see the horses and the chariot plowing through the midst of the sea, while the Eternal King darts His arrows on either side that He may deliver His people? This is the language of imagery, but the facts surpass all poetry. God can be with a people and He can leave them—but when He is with them, their horn is exalted by His power and majesty and the truth which they uphold is as a banner borne aloft to continuous victory. Only we must wait upon the Lord in prayer and seek His face in faith, crying from our hearts, "O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known."

III. In the third place, let us consider THE PROPHET'S PLEA, that it may be our own this morning.

He had first this plea, "Lord, it is Your work; therefore revive Your work." We take the words out of his mouth and pray in like manner, "Lord, if this is our work, end it. If it is man's work, break it down. But if it is Your work, revive it." Have we not said unto our souls that we will preach and we will believe nothing but what is revealed of God in the Scripture? But we will not yield one hair's breadth to the opposers of revelation because of their so-called science and thought? Is it not so? We have lifted the old banner of our fathers and preached the doctrines of the grace of God whereof the very center is Christ crucified, a substitute for believing men. This has been our one theme, our staple subject in

preaching and ministering at all times. Now, Lord, if this is not Your truth, for Your name's sake, blight it and let us follow it no more. But if it is Your truth, set Your seal to it here and in every other place where the name of Jesus is proclaimed. This is good pleading. "It is Your work. We cannot do it. We will not attempt to do it, but Lord, if it is Yours, You must do it—we hold You to it by humble faith."

But the best plea is the one he mentions, "In wrath remember mercy." That is a plea which suits all of us. Mercy, mercy, mercy. You might well smite both the shepherd and the sheep, but have mercy! You might well take away the candlestick and leave us in the darkness, but in wrath remember mercy! You see the coldness of heart and the inconsistency of life of some of Your professed people and You might, therefore, give up Your Zion to desolation, but Lord, remember mercy! Remember it, for You know it, for mercy is a dear attribute of Yours. Remember Your mercy in the everlasting covenant when You chose Your people. Remember Your mercy in the seal of that covenant when Your only-begotten Son was given up to death. Remember all the mercy You have had upon us these many years of our provocation. Remember mercy and still favor us, not because we have any good thing in us or about us that can deserve Your love, but for Your mercy's sake. Out of Your free rich sovereign grace, for mercy's sake still "revive Your work in the midst of the years." It is good pleading—be sure to use it.

One more plea is implied in the rest of the chapter, namely, "You have worked great wonders, O Lord, do this again in the midst of the years." Here have You heard our prayers. Lord, hear our prayers in the midst of the years. Hear them now. Here have You helped the feeble against the strong. Lord, strengthen us yet again. Here have You brought the chief of sinners to Jesus' feet. Lord, do the same again! That is our prayer. By all Your glorious marching through the wilderness when You did lead your people and scattered their foes before them, when the rocks gave them water, and the heavens dropped with bread, by all the wonders of Your grace to Your people of old, since they are still Your people, "revive Your work in the midst of the years."

With this I finish, observing that when the prophet had pleaded and his soul was at rest, he sat down and there were three things which remained upon his mind. Peering into the future he saw the sheen of the Chaldean helmets and the brightness of their cruel swords. He saw the whole land turned into a wilderness—and as he watched, he saw that the fig trees did not blossom, the vines brought forth no fruit, the olives withered. He heard no lowing of cattle. The bleating of sheep was hushed. He saw that famine covered all the land and he said, "Lord, let it all come as I have seen; but Your ways are everlasting and in the thick darkness You have always worked Your will. You have never been defeated and You have never failed Your people. Therefore, as for me, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." That is the posture in which I want you all to be found. We have been assured by people who think they know a great deal about the future that awful times are coming. Be it so. It need not alarm us, for the Lord reigns. Stay yourself on the Lord, my brothers and sisters, and you can rejoice in His name. If the worst comes to the worst, our refuge is in God. If the heavens shall

fall, the God of heaven will stand. When God cannot take care of His people under heaven, He will take them above the heavens and there shall they dwell with Him. Therefore, as far as you are concerned, rest, for you shall stand in your lot at the end of the days.

And then there came over Habakkuk a second spirit. Now, he said, seeing God has worked all these wonders of old and is capable of doing them over again, I will go back to my work despite the lowering clouds, for, "The Lord God is my strength and He will make my feet like hinds' feet"—like the gazelle's feet upon the crags of the mountains, "and He will make me to walk upon my high places." O for this assurance of safety and strength in the Lord! We are in the middle passage, but if we have faith in God, all is safe. We may go and leap in our duties over the mountains and the hills and not be afraid that our foot shall slip. We fall without our God, but with God our feet shall never slide. He keeps the feet of His saints and when the wicked shall be silent in darkness, then shall the strength of the Lord be seen.

Having thus felt that he could always trust God whatever might happen and that he should be upheld whatever might occur, what does Habakkuk say? He goes home about his business and what is the one business he is set upon? He indicates it in his last sentence, which is not a sentence at all, but the final words of his prayer. "To the chief singer on my stringed instruments." He seems to say, "All that remains for me is but to love and sing and wait until the angels come to bear me to their King." "All that I have to do, now," he seems to say, and I want you to say the same, "is just to feel that all is safe in the Eternal hands."

As for me—

"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 never be past,
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures."

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CROWNING BLESSINGS ASCRIBED TO GOD
NO. 1475

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 18, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

(The second Sermon in commemoration of the completion of 25 years of his Ministry in the midst of the Church assembling in the Tabernacle).

"You crown the year with Your goodness."
Psalm 65:11.

GODLY men in olden times felt God to be very near them and they attributed everything they saw in nature to the direct operation of His hand. They were not accustomed to speak of "the laws of matter," "the operation of natural forces" and "the outcome of diverse causes" but they thought more of the First Cause, the foundation and pillar of all existence—and they saw Him at work on all sides. Hear how the Psalmist sings, "You make the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. You visit the earth and water it. You prepare them corn when you have so provided for it. You water the ridges thereof abundantly; you settle the furrows thereof: you make it soft with showers; you bless the springing thereof. You crown the year with Your goodness." God was very near in those days. As Herbert says—

"One might have sought and found You presently
At some fair oak, or bush, or cave, or well."

If the result of our philosophy has been to put God farther off from the consciousness of His creatures, God save us from such philosophy and let us get back again into the simple state in which we were children at home and God, our great Father, worked all things for us. Let us note the distinct mention of God throughout the psalm, for it is well worthy of notice, and let our speech be more after the olden sort—with less of our supposed knowledge in it and a good deal more concerning the presence and the goodness of God.

I am not about to use our text in reference to the outside world and to the husbandry of man, but we shall see how true it is within the church, which is the husbandry of God. The language was meant to describe the field of nature, but it is equally true of the garden of the church.

I am going to use the text in this way because of the peculiar circumstances under which we meet, celebrating, as we do, the 25th year of our happy union together as pastor and flock—a period which has, to the fullest extent been crowned with the goodness of the Lord. If I use the text for spiritual purposes I shall not err, for there is always a most striking analogy between the world of grace and the world of nature so that it would be hard to find anything said by inspiration concerning the visible world which might not be correctly spoken with regard to the spiritual world. But I do not depend upon that fact for my justification—I refer you to the psalm itself. It is clear that it was written to praise God, not alone

for His works in the harvest field and abroad upon the sea, but for His wonderful goodness towards His people, for thus the psalm begins, "Praise waits for You, O God, in Zion." It is Zion's hymn which lies before us and therefore the church which Zion represented may well appropriate the language and use it for herself and say concerning all the Lord's mercy to her in her plowing, her sowing, her watching, and the glad harvest of her spiritual husbandry, "You crown the year with Your goodness." The spirit of the text is joyful gratitude and my soul is so filled therewith that I do not want so much to preach to you as to lead you in holy adoration of God for the great mercies with which He has surrounded us as a church and congregation from the first day even until now.

I. And so our first head is DIVINE GOODNESS ADORED. "You crown the year with Your goodness."

Whatever of acceptable service we have rendered and whatever of real success we have achieved has come from the Lord of hosts who has worked all our works in us. Whatever holy results may have followed from earnest efforts and whatever honor has redounded unto God from them is the Lord's doings and it is marvelous in our eyes. "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto Your name be glory for Your mercy and for Your truth's sake." Your goodness, not ours, has crowned the work. Your goodness, indeed, it is which makes every good work good and gives to every good its crown. From its first conception, even to its ultimate conclusion, all virtue is of You. From blade to full corn, all the harvest is of You, O Lord, and to You let it be ascribed. Let us, therefore, praise the Lord with all our hearts for 25 years of prayer and effort, of planning and working, of believing and rejoicing which He has crowned with His goodness.

We will try to follow the run of the psalm and our first note shall be this—*praise must be for God alone*. "Praise waits for You, O God, in Zion." Not for men, nor for priests, nor for pastors, presbyters, bishops, ministers, or whatsoever you choose to call them—"Praise waits for You, O God, in Zion." Whosoever shall have done well in the midst of the church, let him have the love of his brethren, but let all the praise be unto You, O Most High. Far be it for the axe to exalt itself and forget him that fells therewith or for the sword to deprive the conqueror of his glory. Praise is silent while the best of men are passing by—it lays its finger on its lips till the Lord approaches and then bursts forth in gladsome song because *He* appears.

Whatever else you do, my brethren, be sure that your soul magnifies the Lord and abhors the very idea of self-glorification. If the Lord has blessed you, shake off, as Paul shook off the viper from his hand, any idea of ascribing praise to yourself. We are mere vanity and to us belong shame and confusion of face—these are, so to speak, our belongings—the only dowry our fathers have left to us. What are we that the Lord should bless us? Did you bring a soul to Christ the other day? Bless the Holy Spirit who helped you by His power to do so divine a deed. Did you bear bold testimony for the truth but yesterday? Bless Him who is the faithful and true witness, that at His feet you learned how to be true—and by His Spirit were enabled to be brave. "Not unto us! Not unto us!" With vehemence we deprecate the idea of honoring ourselves. Again and again we

put away the usurper's crown which Satan proffers us. How can we endure the base proposal? Shall we rob God of His glory? Even He from whom we derive our very existence? Perish, O pride, abhorred of God and man. O Lord, keep me from the approach of that shameful evil. Brethren, if you have any esteem among men, cast your crown at Jehovah's feet and there let it be. All honor be to God only.

In this spirit, every action of the Christian church ought to be done, for what says the second clause of the psalm? "Unto You shall the vow be performed." Brothers and sisters, we ought to praise God in all that we do by doing it to His praise. There must be no motive of this kind, "I must give because others give. I must attend at such-and-such a meeting because otherwise I should be missed." Cast away from you, I pray you, the service of any master but your Lord in heaven, for you cannot serve two masters. Honor the Lord in all that you do. Whether you teach the classes of the school or preach at the corner of the street or hand a tract to a passerby or preach to the multitude, let the vow be performed as unto the Lord. It is wonderful how sweet it is to do service when it is expressly done *to Him*. I do not marvel that the woman broke the alabaster box *over Him*. Breaking precious boxes and spilling priceless nard may be hard work of itself to selfish flesh and blood, but it becomes a self-gratifying luxury to do it *unto Him*. When our whole life shall be doing service unto the Well-Beloved whom to serve is honor and delight and for whom to die were a bliss unspeakable—then shall we have learned how to live. Lord, You crown the year with Your goodness and therefore we would do all things as unto You, expecting Your grace to assist our service, Your love to accept it, Your pity to forgive it, and Your power to make it effectual to Your own glory. Oh, that I had but power—and God the Holy Spirit has that power—first to take away from each of us all thought of self-glorification. And then to consecrate our entire being, even to our pulse and breath, to His praise whose love has made us what we are!

Further, brethren, in praising God we may be helped to do so and to see how He crowns the year with His goodness when we *remember our answered prayers as a church*. What says the second verse? "O You that hears prayer, unto You shall all flesh come." I say it and there is no boasting in the saying of it, but there is a glorying in God that prayers have been heard which have been put up by this church in ways and manners which have not been less than marvelous. Such of you as have been with us from the beginning will remember times when, in our weakness and in our poverty, we cried to the Lord for help because of our need—and He heard us. Especially was this the case concerning the building of the house in which we are now assembled. Ah, how speedily He helped us! How liberally! How like a God! When we have needed means to feed the children of our Orphanage, the prayer meeting on Monday night has been followed by a response before the week has gone round. When two or three of us have met together, unknown to all the rest, to lay special siege to heaven upon the appearance of troubles which we did not wish to tell to others, we have seen the arm of God made bare among us and we could no more doubt it than we could doubt our own existence. Oh, you that have had your prayers answered, praise

the Lord who crowns your supplications with His acceptance. Remember that it is because of prayer that, as a church, we have continued to advance from strength to strength—and shall not our praises balance our prayers? If the Lord gives goodness, shall not we give gratitude? Our prayers confessed our dependence—we felt that our years could never be crowned unless the Lord crowned them—and now that the blessing has come, let our praises prove our thankfulness while we cry, "You crown the years with your goodness."

And, beloved friends, it may greatly increase our praise of God for all His goodness if we *think of our many sins*. Have we tried to serve Him? Alas, how often have we failed. The iniquities of our holy things might long ago have provoked the Lord to wrath. Among us has there not been much that His pure and holy eyes must have grieved over? The watchers of the church have sometimes come together in sore dismay over this and that which they have seen among the brotherhood and they have cried to God that He would put away the evil thing from among us or help us to overcome the evil one and reclaim the wandering. Nobody knows but God all the cares and anxieties which surround those that watch over such a flock as this. Who is sufficient for these things? Have we been made sufficient? Then infinite grace has done the deed. The best of us, whoever they may be, will be the first to bow before the Lord. And those among us who have exhibited a Christly character and have served the cause of Christ heartily will the most deeply feel that if the Lord had taken the candlestick out of its place and left us in the darkness, we had well deserved it. Eternally blessed be the name of the Ever Merciful. When we have sinned, we have always had an Advocate before the throne and the blood of sprinkling has ever been upon us to make us clean in the sight of the Lord. Blessed be His name, though iniquities prevail against us, yet as for our transgressions, He has purged them away and still does His church lift up her face and live in the smile of His love, rejoicing and triumphant. Beloved, this ought to make us praise God with all our hearts and the psalmist manifested the wisdom of inspiration in reminding us of it.

And once more, the *sacred privileges which infinite mercy has bestowed* upon us should compel us with glad alacrity to magnify the name of God. See how the psalm proceeds! "Blessed is the man whom You choose, and cause to approach unto You, that he may dwell in Your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, even of Your holy temple." Many now present first learned in this house their election of God, for here they were called by almighty grace and enabled to approach their heavenly Father. Blessed be the choosing and calling Lord who now gives us access to Himself and nearness to His person. Do you remember when you first drew near to Him with weeping eyes and melting hearts because His love had broken down your rebellious wills? Oh, it was a sorrowful coming, but it was a true coming, for God was calling you. And do you remember afterwards, when you came to Him with glad hearts and rejoicing eyes, for the Lord had put away your sin and you stood "accepted in the Beloved"? Oh, that glad day! Last Sunday we sang, "Happy day, happy day."

And we may sing it every day and every morning and evening of our lives and not sing it too often. The Lord who chose us and called us and made us to approach Him has not since become our enemy, for He has allowed us ever since to dwell in His house. We are His children. We have not called upon Him like strangers, but we have dwelt in His house as sons and daughters. He has been abiding with us and we have been made to abide in Him. Shall we not praise Him for this? This very house of prayer has been to some of you a quiet resting place. You have been more at home here than when you have been at home. I will be bound to say that you recollect more happy times that you have had here than anywhere else—and these have put out of your memory the sad records of your hard battling in the world, even for a livelihood. I know that many of you live by your Sabbaths. You step over the intervening space from Lord's-Day to Lord's-Day as if the Lord had made a ladder of Sabbaths for you to climb to heaven by. And you have been fed in the Lord's house as well as rested. I know you have, for he who deals out the meat has been fed himself and when he is fed, he knows that others have like appetites and need like food and know when they get it. You have clapped your hands for very joy when redeeming grace and dying love have been the theme and infinite, sovereign, changeless mercy has been the subject of the discourse. Well now, by every happy Sabbath you have had, my brethren, by every holy Monday evening's prayer meeting, by every occasion on which God has met with you in any of the rooms of this building when a few of you at early morning or late in the evening have met together for prayer, by every time in which the visits of Jesus' love have charmed your soul up to heaven's gate, bless and magnify His name who has crowned the years with His goodness. There had been no food for us if the Lord had not given us manna from heaven. There had been no comfortable rest for us if He had not breathed peace upon us. There had been no coming in of new converts, nor going out with rapturous joy of the perfected ones up to the seats above if the Lord had not been with us and therefore to Him be all the praise.

I do not suppose that any stranger here will understand this matter. It may even be that such will judge that we are indulging in self-acclamation under a thin disguise—but this evil we must endure for once. You, my brothers and sisters, who have been together these many years, know what is meant and you know that it is not within the compass of an angel's tongue to express the gratitude which many of us feel who for these 25 years have been banded together in closest and heartiest Christian brotherhood in the service of our Lord and Master.

Strangers cannot guess how happy has been our fellowship or how true our love. Eternity alone shall reveal the multitude of mercies with which God has visited us by means of our association in this church. It is to some of us friend, nurse, mother, and home all in one. If we sing more heartily about ourselves as recipients of divine mercy than some might think comely, we can only say that we cannot help it. If you drop in at a marriage and there is much said at the wedding feast about the family and its history, you need not go and put it in the papers, nor even criticize the family greetings too closely. Very likely they do seem to look too exclusively at home affairs, but pardon them for once. Well, whether

men forgive me or not, I must and will speak, but all I have to say is to ascribe every good thing unto the Lord alone, even to the God of Abraham, "the God of the whole earth shall He be called."

II. Now we will turn to a second point. In the second place, THE ENCIRCLING BLESSING OF THE DIVINE GOODNESS IS TO BE CONFESSED. The Psalmist sings, "You crown the year with Your goodness." As though God circled the year and put a coronet about its head—a gem for every month, a pearl for every day—a matchless crown of unceasing goodness which surrounds the whole year! Now I venture to say that the period of 25 years, or a whole quarter of a century, wears its royal crown even more conspicuously than any single year. From the first day even until now God has enclosed the whole time with His goodness. I make no exception. We had a dark day once, when we were scattered with sorrow, but as I read the fifth verse of the psalm, it is easy to work it into our praise—"By terrible things in righteousness will you answer us, O God of our salvation." Standing happily among you, addressing you in this calm and quiet manner, recall that night in which the multitude seemed to be taken with sudden panic and to rush madly from the house—and then we heard of dead and wounded in our congregation—and the preacher's heart was broken till he felt it would be well to die. Yet out of that calamity, with all its unspeakable grief, there sprang a blessing, the fruit of which we have continued still to reap. Yes, I make no exception to anything. Sick and ill oftentimes has the preacher been, but valued lessons have thus been taught to him and through him taught to the people. Sickness has fallen here and there and sometimes affliction and poverty—but you have, all of you, learned something under the rod and you have blessed God for His fatherly discipline filled with eternal benefit. Yes, Lord, it is true in our case, "You crown the year with Your goodness."

Now, let us just look at this all-encircling goodness of the Lord which we have seen from the first day till now.

I saw it, first of all, in inspiring the few brethren that met together as a church with confidence in God at the very outset. Our first meeting for prayer was, I think, more largely attended than our first sermon. The church was diminished and brought low, but the brethren prayed with great reliance upon God and showed no sign of distrust. They did not say, "Die." They did not believe in becoming extinct, but every man seemed resolved to set his face like a flint, to win prosperity at the hands of God—and for this I thank *Him*. Is He not said in our psalm to be the confidence of the ends of the earth? This confidence was the beginning of an endless chain of goodness. Then the Lord was pleased in infinite mercy to prepare men's hearts to hear the gospel. It was not possible, they said, that great places could be filled with crowds to hear the old-fashioned gospel. The pulpit had lost its power, so unbelievers told us, and yet no sooner did we begin to preach in simple strains the gospel of Christ, then the people flew as a cloud and as doves to their windows. And what listening there was at Park Street, where we scarcely had air enough to breathe! And when we got into the larger place, what attention was manifest! What power seemed to go with every word that was spoken. I say it, though I was the preacher, for it was not I, but the grace of

God which was with me. There were stricken down among us some of the most unlikely ones. There were brought into the church and added to God's people some of those that had wandered far away from the path of truth and righteousness—and these, by their penitent love, quickened our life and increased our zeal. The Lord gave the people more and more a willingness to hear and there was no pause in the flowing stream of hearers, nor in the incoming of converts. The Holy Spirit came down like showers which saturate the soil till the clods are ready for the breaking. And then it was not long before we heard on the right and on the left the cry, "What must we do to be saved?" We were busy enough in those days in seeing converts and thank God we have been ever since. We had some among us who gave themselves up to watch for the souls of men and we have a goodly number of such helpers now, perhaps more than we ever had and thank God, these found and still find many souls to watch over. Still the arrows fly and still the smitten cry out for help and ask that they may be guided to the great healing Lord. Blessed be God's name for this. He went with us all those early days and gave us sheaves even at the first sowing, so that we began with mercy and He has been with us even until now—till our life has become one long harvest-home.

I am bound to acknowledge with deep thankfulness that during these 25 years the word has been given me to speak when the time has come for preaching. It may look to you a small thing that I should be able to come before you in due time, but it will not seem so to my brothers in the ministry who recollect that for 25 years my sermons have been printed as they have been delivered. It must be an easy thing to go and buy discourses at sixpence or a shilling—each ready lithographed—and read them off as hirelings do, but to speak your heart out every time and yet to have something fresh for 25 years is no child's play. Who shall do it unless he cries to God for help? I read but the other day a newspaper criticism upon myself in which the writer wondered that a man should keep on year after year with so few themes and such a narrow groove to travel in. But my brethren, it is not so. Our themes are infinite for number and fullness. Every text of Scripture is boundless in its meaning. We could preach from the Bible throughout eternity and not exhaust it. The groove narrows? The thoughts of God narrow? The divine word narrow? They know it not, for His commandment is exceeding broad. Had we to speak of politics or philosophy, we had run dry long ago—but when we have to preach the Savior's everlasting love—the theme is always fresh, always new. The incarnate God, the atoning blood, the risen Lord, the coming glory—these are subjects which defy exhaustion. Yet we bless the Eternal Spirit who gives both seed to the sower and bread to the eater, that we have had spiritual food for our people as often as the season has come round! I must render my special note and if at any time you have been blessed by the word I have spoken, you must render your tribute, too. All these years He has crowned us with His goodness by giving us the good Word to preach in His name.

But, dear brethren, I am most happy to thank God for crowning the years with His goodness by helping us in the reaping and gathering in of souls. I say, "us," advisedly. Here we have had a church which from the first began to seek the souls of men. If any of you do not work for Christ,

I should think you have a hard time of it among us, for one or another is pretty sure to use the ox-goad upon you. Both by example and by precept and by the general spirit of the brotherhood, idlers stand rebuked. Our brethren and sisters from the first began working for the good of men as best they could. Not in a fine, artistic manner—I do not think we ever tried that—we did it in a very bland manner, but we went at it with all our hearts. Our young brethren tried their hands at teaching and preaching—very likely it was intellectually very poor preaching—but it was full of heart and it did good in spite of its imperfections. The teaching and the looking after converts, the trying to form new churches, the opening of prayer meetings, and all sorts of holy works were not done after any set fashion—but they were done somehow and often done with a desperate valor and a simple faith which surprised and cheered me. Often and often have I brushed the tears from my eyes when I have received from some here present offerings for the Master's work which utterly surpassed all my ideas of giving. The consecration of your substance by some among you has been apostolic. I have known those who have so given from their poverty that they have sometimes given all that they had—and when I have even hinted at their exceeding the bounds of prudence, they have seemed hurt and pressed the gift again, for some other work of the Master whom they love. The Lord knows every one of your hearts—wherein you have come short He knows and may His grace forgive—but where, as I most honestly bear witness, many here have gone up to the measure of their ability and even beyond it, He knows and will reward. For your zeal, industry, and consecration I must bless the Lord who crowns the years with His goodness.

There are few among you, I should think, who have worked for the Master who have not seen most encouraging results in the conversions of those for whom you have cared. Certainly there are many among you between whom and myself there might pass a telegraphic glance awakening glad memories. You have brought to me one after another souls that you have won. You wanted me to speak to them personally because you have an idea that I might be tenderer than anybody else. I am afraid you think too highly of me in this respect. Still I have been right glad to see those you brought to me because they were your children. How glad I have been that, inasmuch as I brought you to Christ through His grace, when you have brought others to Christ I have seemed to be a sort of grandfather in your midst, rejoicing in your joy, triumphing in your success. And I mean it sincerely when I say that I look upon many of you with an intense love and satisfaction because God has made you great winners of souls. You have not sat here to listen to me and to enjoy your Sundays, but you have been sowers of the good seed. You have many times denied yourselves the privileges of God's house that you might go and look after others—and the Lord has given you your wages. How many you have brought back whose feet had almost gone! How many you have helped by sweet encouragement when they have been depressed! I know not all your labors of love, but God knows. This much I know, that the pastorate of this church is practically carried out by the church itself. Beloved elders labor with a diligence which I cannot too much commend, still it were impossible with 5,000 persons to care for, that a few men should

fulfill the service. You watch over one another in the Lord and for this I bless Him, to whom must be rendered all the praise. I feel the more free to speak about what He has worked by you and in you because you will not take any glory to yourselves but lay it at His feet. Lord, You have blessed us exceedingly beyond what we asked or even thought—and in return we bless You! When I recollect how as a boy, I stood among you and feebly began to preach of Jesus Christ and how these 25 years without dissension, ay, without the dream of dissension, in perfect love compacted as one man, you have gone on from one work of God to another and have never halted, hesitated, or drawn back, I must and will bless and magnify Him who has crowned these years with His goodness.

III. Now I come to my closing point. It is this—THE CROWNING BLESSING IS CONFESSED TO BE OF God—not only the encircling blessing, but the crowning blessing. What is the crown of a church? Well, some churches have one crown and some another. I have heard of a church whose crown was its organ—the biggest organ, the finest organ ever played—and the choir the most wonderful choir that ever was. Everybody in the district said, "Now, if you want to go to a place where you will have fine music, that is the spot." Our musical friends may wear that crown if they please. I will never pluck at it or decry it—I feel no temptation in that direction. I have heard of others whose crown has been their intellect. There are very few people indeed, not as many people by one-tenth as there are seats, but then they are such a select people, the *elite*, the thoughtful and intelligent! The ministry is such that only one in a hundred can possibly understand what is said and the one in the hundred who does understand it is, therefore, a most remarkable person. That is their crown. Again I say I will not envy it. Whatever there may be that is desirable about it, the brother who wears it shall wear it all his days for me. I have heard of other crowns—amongst the rest, that of being "a most respectable church." All the people are respectable. The minister, of course, is respectable. I believe he is "Reverend" or "Very Reverend," and everybody and thing about him is to the last degree "respectable." Peasant jackets and cotton gowns are warned off by the surpassing dignity of everything in and around the place. As for a working man, such a creature is never seen on the premises and could not be supposed to be and if he were to come he would say, "The preacher preaches double Dutch or Greek, or something of the sort." He would not hear language which he could understand. This is not a very brilliant crown, this crown of respectability—it certainly never flashed ambition into my soul. But our crown under God has been this—the poor have the gospel preached to them, souls are saved, and Christ is glorified. O my beloved church, hold fast what you have, that no man take this crown away from you! As for me, by God's help, the first and last thing that I long for is to bring men to Christ. I care nothing about fine language or about the pretty speculations of prophecy or a hundred dainty things, but to break the heart and bind it up—to lay hold on a sheep of Christ and bring it back into the fold is the one thing I would live for. You also are of the same mind, are you not? Well, we have had this crowning blessing that, as nearly as I can estimate, more than 9,000 persons have joined this church. If they were all alive now or all with us now, what a company

they would be. Some have fallen asleep and many are members with other churches, working for the Master where they are probably more influential than they could have been at home. Some of our members we were glad to lose because our loss was the gain of the universal church. We sent them out to colonize and so to increase the Master's kingdom. For these 9,000 and more let God be praised. It is a crown in which we must and will rejoice.

But another crown to any church, I think, is when its members are maintained in their profession. If many are added and then they are scattered again—if they do but come to go, if they are found and then straightway lost—what is the benefit of it? But this has been our crown of rejoicing, that we have seen the young converts matured in grace. The blade has become the ear and the ear has become the full corn in the ear, for which God is thanked. And there has been this about it, that as we built together as living stones, so we have remained together. I have a great many faults and I often wonder how it is you put up with me, but we have not thought of parting—the mortar which holds us together in the building is very binding. I am not so much surprised that I put up with you, for it is my duty and office to bear with all and none of you have caused me grief, except such as have walked unworthy and grieved the Spirit of God. We have gone on well together, under God's blessing these many years and have no hesitation about continuing in the same loving unity.

During these 25 years, I have had to attend to the quarrels and differences of scores of little churches where their weakness should have been the strongest argument for union. Men usually divide when they are already too few for the work and this is a most grievous evil under the sun. Churches torn apart with contention have laid the wretched differences before me and I have had many a heavy burden to carry while trying to set things right. But I have not had to spend one five minutes in seeking to heal a breach in this church or maintain its unity. The Lord has given us brotherly love and unto His name be praise. Brethren who have been members of other churches where you have seen trouble, you know what a comfort it is to be connected with a church where we endeavor to walk in love to one another and where the noise of war has not disturbed our gates. Truly I must say and I do say it, "O Lord, You give peace in our borders and You fill us with the finest of the wheat. You crown the years with Your goodness."

But is this all? We ought to bless God for the fruit-bearing ones that have been among us. Workers of all sorts are found for the different agencies of the church as they are required and God has given us some whom He has honored exceedingly, who are our strength for home work. But besides that, this church has this day an army of above 400 ministers trained at her side who are now scattered all over the globe preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, while as a militia we have some 80 or more disseminating godly books.

Best of all, we have a growing band of missionaries. My heart leaped within me on Monday night when I heard the young people and saw how one and another of our brethren were devoting themselves to mission work. This I reckon to be the brightest crown of all. If the Lord will but

infuse the missionary spirit into us and force out many to go abroad to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ our cup will run over and we shall again have to say, "Praise waits for You, O God, in Zion, for You crown the years with your goodness."

Last of all, and never to be forgotten, during these 25 years there have gone from us to the upper realms about 800 who had named the name of Jesus. Professing their faith in Christ, living in His fear, dying in the faith, they gave us no cause to doubt their sincerity and therefore we may not question their eternal safety. Many of them gave us in life and in death all the tokens we could ask for of their being in Christ and therefore we sorrow not as those that are without hope. Why, when I think of them, many of them my sons and daughters now before the throne, they fill me with solemn exultation. Do you not see them in their white robes? Eight hundred souls redeemed by blood. These are only what we know of and had enrolled. How many there may have been converted here who never joined our earthly fellowship, but nevertheless, have gone home, I cannot tell. There probably have been more than those whose names we know, if we consider the wide area over which the printed sermons circulate. They are gathering home, one by one, one by one, but they make a goodly company. Our name is Gad, for "a troop comes." Happy shall we be to overtake those who have marched out ahead of us and entered into the Promised Land before us. Let us remember them and by faith join our hands with them. Flash a thought to unite the broken family, for we are not far from them, nor are they far from us, since we are one in Christ. This too is our crown.

And now I want one thing more. There is such a thing as a greed that is never satisfied and I have a great greed upon me now. I frankly confess my covetousness. Whenever the Lord gives us any great spiritual gift we want more, nor are we blamed for this, but bidden to covet earnestly the best gifts. This, then, is my further desire. I should be rejoiced beyond measure if, on this night and during the next two or three days in which we keep holy day and bless the Lord for His goodness, some brethren were moved by the Holy Spirit to undertake some new work for Christ which they had not thought of before. Come, my brother, may the Lord crown this year this day with His goodness by putting it into your heart to break up new soil and sow a fresh field for Jesus. Have you been an idler? Buckle to! Today join the laborers and leave the loiterers. Get to the Master's work. Have you already been diligent? I have more hope in appealing to you.

Brother, Sister, try something more—something more tonight. Cast over in your mind what there is that is left undone in the branch of holy service for which you are fitted or for which you might get to be fitted and at once engage in it. Come now. Consecrate yourself to the Lord anew tonight and pray Him to lift you to a higher platform and into a nobler state of consecration. That would be a blessed crowning of the years with His goodness. And what if some young men here were to say, "We shall prosper in business, no doubt, for we feel up to the mark for it. God has given us brain and skill and a fair opening, but inasmuch as we have capacity we will consecrate it." I hear the sorrows of China borne on the wailing of the wind and the sighing of the sea! Millions upon millions are

perishing for lack of knowledge—will no one pity them? The need of India's teeming population cries to us in voices which pierce the heart—will no one listen and help? A voice comes forth from the excellent glory, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" It were a crown to end the year with if there came from this and that set of useful, earnest Christian men the reply of individual hearts, "Here am I. Here am I. Send me." The Lord give us this crown.

One thing more. Oh, if some hearts would yield themselves to the Savior tonight. If some were converted tonight, what a crown that would be to finish up these years with. Testimonial, sirs? No testimonial can ever be given to the preacher which can equal a soul converted. These are the seals of our ministry and the wages of our hire. Socrates on his birthday had a present given him by each of his students. Some brought less and some brought more. Among the rest there was one who had nothing in the world to bring and so he came to Socrates and said, "Master, I give you myself. I love you with all my heart." The sage judged this to be the most precious of all the tributes. Will not some of you cry, "I do not know that I could be a missionary or that I have any gifts, or talents, or substance that I could contribute, but Lord, I give my heart to You to be renewed by grace"? God bring you, poor sinner, to Jesus' feet to surrender your whole nature to His sway that He may wash it in His blood, fill it with His Spirit, and use it for His glory. He says, "My son, give me your heart," and when the heart is yielded, He accepts the gift. May the Eternal Spirit lead many to give themselves thus to Jesus this night and it will be the crowning joy of all the years. Amen and amen.

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JESUS, THE JUDGE
NO. 1476

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 25, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And He commanded us to preach unto the people and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead." Acts 10:42.

You will notice throughout this short address by Peter how very careful he is to speak not at all upon his own authority, but wholly upon the authority of the Most High. He commences his conversation by saying that God had shown him that it would be right for him, as a Jew, to commune with Gentiles. God had shown it to him—he had not, therefore, broken through Jewish law as the result of his own judgment, but under divine direction. He goes on to commence his sermon by saying, "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel." He had come, therefore, not with a word of his own inventing, but with a word of God's sending. "That word, I say, you know." Then he speaks of Jesus of Nazareth Himself as anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, and he speaks of himself and his fellow apostles as "witnesses," bearing testimony to what the Lord Jesus had done. Now, this way of speaking was perhaps rendered the more necessary by the mistaken reverence which Cornelius had rendered to his person, for he fell down at the apostle's feet and worshipped him, but it should be the constant habit of all the ministers of Christ. It is ours to keep within the boundaries of our commission and shield ourselves behind its authority. What are we that we should of ourselves have anything to say unto you, my brethren? What is our authority and by what right can we speak of ourselves? Verily, we have no such power over you and if we come unto you in our own name, bid us not God speed. Every true minister must speak because he is commanded to speak. He must speak what he is commanded to speak and he must be prepared to fall back upon the authority of the Word of God continually. "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." But if the testimony of any man is in accordance with the Word of God then is God with him and it would be perilous to reject his testimony.

The apostle was not long in his address before he came to the doctrine of the judgment of all men by Jesus Christ. He says that he was commanded to preach it and therefore he did preach it. It may not be called, "the gospel," but it is certainly a most important accessory truth to the gospel—it is one of those doctrines without which a gospel ministry would not be complete. I mean that if in any testimony concerning Christ, the doctrine that He shall come a second time to judge the world were utterly neglected, such a testimony would not be a complete gospel.

Hence you find that Paul, when he preached to the famous congregation of the Areopagites, took care to insist upon this truth. In Acts 17:30-31, he says, "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men everywhere to repent because He has appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He has ordained; whereof He has given assurance unto all men, in that He has raised Him from the dead." This was also a part of Paul's subject when he stood before Felix, "He reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come"—and this made Felix tremble, for there is great force of conviction in that solemn truth. The doctrine of the judgment of the world by Christ was used by Peter and Paul and other apostles as a sort of preliminary truth which they insisted upon before they came to the essence of the gospel which consists in preaching Jesus Christ as a Savior. They plowed with this doctrine before they sowed the invitations of the gospel. They did not, however, lay the axe to the root and then forget to proclaim the word of grace—they preached the terrors of the Lord, not in a legal, but a gospel manner. Peter does so in this case, for he first speaks of Christ in the judgment and then in verse 43 he adds, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins."

This morning, in obedience to the same command, I shall try to speak, first of all, upon the message, and secondly, upon the evident importance to be attached to it which we shall in a great measure gather from the words of our text. May the Holy Spirit who in Peter's day fell on all those who heard his word, fall also upon you as you are led to believe in the Lord Jesus.

I. First, let us consider THE MESSAGE which God commands all His servants to declare. That message begins with the assurance that *there is a moral government*. There is a Judge over the race of men—we are not as the locusts, of whom Solomon says that they have no king. The world is not left unobserved of God to be as a den of wild beasts or a pond of fish where everyone devours his fellow and none calls them to account. Men are not permitted to do whatsoever is right in their own eyes, but there is a law and a Governor over them. God has committed all authority unto His Son and Jesus Christ at this moment reigns and rules over the whole race of men, taking account of all the actions that are done in their bodies and making note of everything in order to the summing up of all things by-and-by. There is a law, there is a rule, and there is a government over the human commonwealth. The race is not left to anarchy—Jesus Christ is Head of all.

That being announced, we have to go on to say that *there will be a judgment*. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." As the result of there being a government over mankind, a judgment will be held wherein cases will be tried and justice will be administered. This indeed is the sanction and support of the law that it will call men to account. Its voice of power proclaims, "O you house of Israel, I will judge you everyone after his ways." There will be a day of final account. I need not stop to quote the numerous passages of Scripture

which assert that every one of us must give an account of himself before God, for we are fully persuaded that "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." But my brethren, we think that all reasonable persons will conclude that there must be a judgment if they will only consider the character of God. Being the ruler of the world, He must do justice. We should count any man who was made a king but a miserable counterfeit of a monarch if he never administered justice at all. If we had a state without laws or laws without punishments for those who broke them, we should be indeed in a wretched condition and our king would be the mimicry of royalty. But such is not the case in the kingdom of Him who rules over all. It is said of our Lord, "You love righteousness and hate wickedness"—this makes us feel that He wills to do justice, and as assuredly as He has power to punish transgression, we feel certain that He will do so. There will come a day in which He will judge the acts of men because His character is not such that He could or would trifle with evil. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." "The Father who without respect of persons judges according to every man's works" will not permit offenders to insult His laws with impunity. It is wrapped up in the very idea of God that He is Judge of all the earth and must do right—and to do right He must hold a final court in which He will "render to every man according to his deeds."

The character of man equally involves a judgment, for he is evidently a responsible being and this is dear to anybody who cares to open his eyes. We count not the cattle of the hills or the fish of the sea responsible—let them do what they may. No one blames the wolf that he howls or the lion that he devours, but when we come to think of man, we regard him as a creature whose actions have a moral quality about them and are either right or wrong. In fact, he is a responsible agent. Surely, where there is responsibility there is a law and where there is a law there must some day or other be rewards for well-doers and punishments for malefactors. The constitution and nature of man inevitably require this or else his responsibility is given to him in vain. Now, the present tangled condition of the world's history requires that there should be a day of rectification at the end of time. At this moment, we often see the wicked prosper while the righteous are abased. At this day, the mirth and the jollity are often connected with sin, while sorrow and grief go hand in hand with godliness in many and many an instance. Remember how the wise man argued and be persuaded by his reasoning, "Moreover, I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked." Since the actions of men are evidently left unpunished now and high-handed sin holds power, there must come a righting of the wrong and a clearing of the just. The Judge of all the earth must do right and how can this be but by a final adjustment in which it shall be clearly seen that though the wicked prosper for a while, they are as bullocks fattening for the slaughter—and though the righteous suffer for a while, it is but as the gold suffers in the furnace—that it may come forth purified. Every heart that has ever groaned under the oppressor's

wrong, every soul that has ever writhed under the proud man's arrogance must feel that there must be an end to the reign and riot of evil and a time in which innocence shall be avenged. Every Job may lift himself up before his false accusers and say, "I know that my avenger lives and that He will stand in the latter day upon the earth."

Moreover, there is in the consciences of most, if not of all men, a testimony to a coming judgment. I will not say of all men, for I believe that some manage to drug their self-consciousness as at last to quiet all their fears. But the most of men believe in a judgment to come and in their more thoughtful moods are alarmed thereat. There is more faith as to the judgment than we dream of in those who are most profanely daring in their speeches against God. The reason why they speak so exceedingly proud is because their consciences make them cowards and to veil their cowardice they use bombastic words. These are the men that tremble first—the men that first cry out for mercy when the hand of God begins to touch them. How very seldom do you find a man die in uninterested unbelief! At some time or other, reason will speak and conscience will be heard and then that "dread of something after death" makes men cling even to the most wretched state—choosing, rather, to bear the ills they have than fly to others that they know not of. Universal conscience, or almost universal conscience, speaks like a prophet within the soul and tells of a throne of judgment, a heaven, and a hell.

Now, whether we had or had not this argument to support us would make not one jot of difference to those of us who believe in the Word of God. What God says would always be enough for us, even if the nature of things and the apparent force of reason should flatly contradict His Word. Yes, I will even put it in that harsh way. We are always glad when we get the subordinate help of arguments fetched from the nature of things and so forth, but we care very little about them. We have accepted the Bible as God's revelation. We believe the teaching of this book to be infallible and inasmuch as the Scriptures declare that there is a judgment to come, we confidently look for it.

Now, according to the revelation of the gospel, *this judgment will be conducted by the man, Christ Jesus*. God will judge the world, but it will be through His Son whom He has ordained and appointed to actually carry out the business of that last tremendous day. He who shall sit upon the throne is "the Son of man." He will be thus enthroned, I suppose, partly because it is involved in His mediatorial office in which the Lord has put all things in subjection under His feet. He is at the right hand of God—"angels and authorities, and powers being made subject unto Him." God has been pleased to put the world, not under the direct government of personal deity, but under the government of the Mediator, that He might deal with us in mercy. That Mediator is Prophet, Priest and King—and His kingship would be shorn of its glory if the King had not the power of life and death and the power of holding court and judging His subjects. Jesus Christ, therefore, being mediatorial King and Sovereign and all power being given unto Him in heaven and in earth, He will take unto Himself His great power at the last and will judge the na-

tions. This high position is also awarded to our Lord as an honor from the Father by which shall be wiped away every trace of the shame and dishonor through which He passed among the sons of men. The kings of the earth stood up to judge Him, but they shall stand before Him to be judged. The rulers took counsel together to condemn Him, but the rulers shall stand at His bar to be themselves condemned. Pontius Pilate and the chief priests shall all be there, and Caesar and all Caesars and Czars and emperors and kings and princes shall do homage before Him in the lowest manner by standing before His judgment seat as prisoners to be tried by Him. There will be no recollection of the scepter of reed, for He shall break His enemies with a rod of iron. There shall be no marks of the thorn-crown, for on His head shall be many a diadem. Men shall not then be able to think of Him as the man of tears with His visage sadly marred by grief and shame, for His eyes shall be as flames of fire and His countenance as the sun shining in its strength. O cross, whatever of shame there was about you shall be wiped out forever among the sons of men, for this man shall sit upon the throne of judgment! The Father designed to put this honor upon Him and He has right well deserved it. Jesus Christ as God has a glory which He had with the Father before the world was, but as God-man, He has a glory which His Father has given Him to be the reward of that labor of life and death by which He has redeemed His people. "Give unto the Lord glory and strength" is the ascription of all His saints and God, the everlasting Father has done this unto His Son, concerning whom He has sworn that every knee shall bow before Him and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father. "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

I want you especially to remember that in the Holy Scriptures we are perpetually reminded in reference to the judgment that it is a judgment by *the man Christ Jesus*. There must be special reason for this honor done to the manhood of our Lord or it would not be so continually insisted upon. Daniel in his prophecy (7:13), says, "I saw in the night visions and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him." The coming one in his vision was "the Son of man" and we all know to whom that title belongs. Hence our Lord Himself very early in His ministry took care to claim for Himself this power of governance and judgment. Turn to John 5:22, where He says, "The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." Then in verse 27, He gives us the reason for His being thus ordained to be the Judge, "And He has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man." So that not only does Daniel see Him as the Son of man, but Jesus Christ Himself declares that the authority to judge is given to Him because He is the Son of man—there being in that fact a peculiar reason

why He should be Judge of all mankind. Your memories will at once allow you to recollect that in the famous pictures drawn by our Lord wherein He describes the judgment (Matt 25:31-32), He takes care to begin by saying, "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: 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." He does not call Himself the Son of God in this case, but says, "The Son of man shall come in His glory." So is it too in Matthew 13:41—"The Son of man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend." This it was which seems to have struck the apostle Paul so much when he quoted from the Psalms and applied the language to Christ in Hebrews 2, "What is man that You are mindful of him? Or the son of man, that You visit him? You made him a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, and did set him over the works of Your hands: You have put all things in subjection under his feet." Whereon he says, "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honor."

It is as Son of man as well as Son of God that our Lord will judge the world at the last great day. Be sure then of His impartiality. He is God yet man—having an intense sympathy both with the King and with the subjects—having manifested His grace even to the rebellious and being yet filled with intense love to the Father and His law. If we could have the election of a judge, what being could we suppose more impartial or so impartial as the Lord, who though He counted it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh? O blessed Judge, be You at once enthroned by the choice of the whole creation!

This person is peculiarly suitable to be Judge because He has a perfect knowledge of the law. Yes, "Your law is My delight," He says. He put on righteousness as a garment. The Lord Jesus Christ, from His youth up, was an exceedingly deep scholar of the law of God. He grew as a child in wisdom concerning the will of God. His ears were opened to hear as He learned that He might know how to speak a word in season to them that are weary. He knows the law, for He made Himself subject to it and kept it in all its parts. This is the first requisite of a judge—to be thoroughly well-acquainted with the statute-book. Yet further, He knows also the evil of law-breaking. What a Judge is this whom God has appointed, who, strange to say, has Himself suffered for sin though in Him was no sin, for He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Yet the sting of sin, which is death, He has endured and the curse of sin has passed upon Him, as it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." With what precision then can He judge who, being both God and man and knowing well the law, has also an intimate acquaintance with all the heinousness and wickedness of law-breaking! Well did the Father choose Him to be the Judge of the quick and the dead. It puts judgment beyond a fault when He who is the Friend of sinners is made the Judge of sinners.

Thus much then concerning the fact that there will be a judgment and that this judgment will be conducted by the man, Christ Jesus. Now observe that *this judgment will concern all mankind*. He will judge the quick and the dead, that is, those who will be alive at His coming He will judge as well as those who have already died. He may come before some of us shall die. The time of His advent we cannot guess, but we shall certainly appear before His judgment seat whenever He shall fix the assize. The summons will exempt no man—from the utmost ends of the earth shall they come. None will be able to hide themselves in solitary places or to find shelter amongst the crowded cities. Here and there a criminal escapes the vigilant eye of human law. Though it is difficult to do so, there have been cunning men who year after year have managed by various disguises to escape recognition and have continued their depredations and evaded the police. But there shall be no such instance among all that shall be alive and remain at the coming of the Lord. And as for the dead who have died in past ages, they shall all rise again. What prodigious multitudes! What crowds that baffle all arithmetic! Yet shall they all be arraigned and tried—all the living and all the dead of Christian lands and heathen lands—of antediluvian ages and of ages upon which the ends of the earth have come. Kings and princes and every bondman, rich and poor, small and great, shall all stand in that last great day in Christ's great judgment hall. It concerns you, my brothers, as it does me. It concerns you, my sister and your children, as well as those who have gone before. As surely as the Lord lives, the things that are seen shall pass away—mountains and hills shall flee before Him and rocks shall be melted down at His presence—but His Word shall never pass away. And behold, He comes. "Behold, He comes with clouds and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him."

Just a few words concerning this judgment. When He does come, that *judgment will be a very eminent one*. It will be a judgment fixed by the peremptory ordinance of God, for the text says that He has "ordained" Jesus to sit as Judge. It is by ordinance and decree that Jesus Christ will take the throne. He takes not this honor upon Himself on His own authority, but He claims the throne as one that was ordained of God as was Aaron. In all His offices, He quotes the divine decree and for this, the last of all, He has the ordinance of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead. Everything done will be by divine authority—there will be the stamp and seal of the everlasting God set upon everything that shall be transacted on that grand occasion. The whole trial will be most solemnly conducted. I shall not for a single moment attempt a description of the scene. There is room indeed for imagery and poetry, but we have none of these and want them not this morning. This will suffice, "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thes 4:16).

There shall be shoutings when He comes, as if all the angelic bands lifted up their voices in acclamation and above them all one voice shall

ring out most majestically, the voice of the archangel. And yet above all other sounds a trumpet call shall thunder forth, most dreadful to the ears of ungodly men. Louder than ten thousand thunders shall it peal over earth and sea and none shall be able to resist the summons. Then, in His descent, the Judge shall pass into the region of the clouds upon a great white throne shall He sit and every eye shall see Him—and also they which crucified Him. His coming will be with great pomp of angelic splendor, fit for the state of such a King and for the solemnity of such a day.

That judgment will be very searching, for the apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:10 that we shall give an account for the deeds done in the body, each one according to what he has done, whether it is good or whether it is bad. And our Savior, in Matthew 12:36, informs us that for every idle word that man shall speak he must give account in the Day of Judgment—words, therefore, will be put in evidence as well as actions. Yes, and there will be an account taken in that day of things which never reached the publicity of words, for you know how Solomon closed up the book of Ecclesiastes by saying that, "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil." Paul also says, "God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." Such things as were never known by our fellow creatures and were forgotten by ourselves shall be revealed and judged. Imaginations, lustings, and desires of the soul, secret thoughts and passions and murmuring shall be laid open before all men and before God shall a reckoning be made.

That judgment will be of a very exact kind. It will proceed upon evidence and documentary testimony—slander and hearsay will not be mentioned. No condemnation will come upon good men through the whisperings of malicious tongues, but everything shall be gone about in due order and according to the rules of the court of heaven. Listen to this, "And I saw a great white throne and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them: and I saw the dead, small and great stand before God, and the books were opened"—documentary testimony brought into court as evidence, "and another book was opened, which is the book of life and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Don't you see that the judgment will be done by record and solemn affidavit, in that great Court of King's Bench? There will be no hurry, no passing over judgment with a light hand—all will be done in truth and equity and according to facts recorded by the infallible omniscience of God.

But what severity of justice will then be seen, for things will not be judged by their outward appearance, but put to thorough test and trial. Hear the words of the Lord, "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." Well may we cry with Malachi, "But 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 a fuller's soap."

The sentences which will then be pronounced will be so just as to be indisputable and even the condemned will admit the justness thereof. At the last great day, not one of the condemned shall be able to deny his guilt nor the justice of the sentence. Though sent to hell, he will feel it is what he deserves. You remember when the king came in to see the guests and found a man that had not on a wedding garment, the intruder could make no excuse, but stood speechless? There shall be an assent in every human mind to the sentence of the Christ of God—it shall flash such awful conviction into the soul of every sinner that, though he is damned, his own soul shall say, "Amen," to the condemnation. Oh, what a Judgment Day will that be in which everyone shall be certain, even in his own sad case, that the verdict of the Judge is bright as the sun with righteousness and cannot be appealed against! This, surely, will be the hell of hell that it is deserved even in its utmost pang and bitterest pain. Oh, my hearers, will any of you have to say, "Amen," to your own condemnation? I pray the Lord to save you from such a fate.

That verdict will be final and irreversible. When Jesus has once pronounced it, there will be no appeal, no suing out of a writ of error, no reversal of the decree. He Himself has said it, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." There will be no delay in execution, nor escape from the doom. There will be no steeling of the heart to endure it and no outliving the doom. It will last on in all its terror, the final verdict of the Judge of all the earth, pronounced by the Christ of love. I know not how to speak upon such a theme as this, but must leave it as it stands before you. May the Holy Spirit impress it upon your minds.

II. I desire, in the second place, to call your attention for a little while to THE EVIDENT IMPORTANCE OF THIS MESSAGE. Its importance may be gathered from the text because it says, "He commanded us to preach this." Did the eternal God give a command for us to preach this truth?

Then He must know, in His infinite wisdom, that there is a great necessity for its being declared. But please notice the way in which the command is to be executed. "He commanded us to preach." Now, to preach means to herald, to proclaim. Lo, we this day precede the great Judge, as the trumpeters go before our judges on judgment day and this is our cry, "He comes! He comes! He comes! The Man of Nazareth, Jesus, the crucified, is coming, appointed Judge of the quick and the dead!" And we are to cry this with all the loudness of voice and earnestness of tone and solemnity of manner which become the heralds of the King of kings.

Whether you believe it or not, He comes; whether you trifle with it or not, whether you are rebels or loyal subjects, He comes and that speedily. He comes to judge the world in righteousness and the people in equity. Thus we make solemn proclamation in His name, declaring to you a fact which you do well to hear with serious hearts and thoughtful minds.

But then it is added that we are "*to testify* that it is He." Having given the proclamation, we are then to bear witness solemnly and to speak the

fact over and over again for God, adding our own belief that it is surely true. In the Greek, this word "testify" is very forcible, something like the affirmation which those of us who account it wrong to take an oath are known to make in courts of law. We give our solemn affirmation and truthful testimony that it is so. It is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth that we declare when we tell you that Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Son of man, is coming upon the clouds of heaven to judge the quick and the dead. We are to speak of this as a thing we know and are certain of—and we are to stand before men, and whether they will hear or whether they will forbear—testify that it is so. That which is to be both proclaimed and testified in obedience to the divine command is no mean matter. Hearken to it and take good heed, I beseech you.

And this is to be done "*unto the people*"—not to some few, but to all the people—to the Gentiles, to the nations. Wherever we go, this is to be part of our proclamation as the heralds of Christ, "Behold, He comes to judge mankind." To you, my hearers, even to you is this word of warning sent. Will you not regard it?

Now, brethren, there is importance in this, not only according to the text, but from other reasons. If you think awhile you will see that it sheds a great light upon the future of the ungodly. Whatever you, my brother, choose to say of the wrath of God which is revealed concerning the impenitent, please think of this. It may be you feel troubled about its dread severity and eternity, but let this ease your perplexity that the Judge upon whom the sentence depends is Jesus Christ, the Savior of men. I feel perfectly safe in leaving the future of the wicked in such hands as His, and however terrible may be His own words—and they are terrible to the last degree—about the future of the lost, I, for one, can never quarrel with Him. If it were Moses that spoke, if he spoke for God, I dare not challenge him, yet there might be the temptation. But when He speaks who is the Son of man, let all the earth keep silence before Him. The severity which He exercises must be inevitable severity—you can be sure of that. If there is pain and anguish and wrath to every soul of man that does evil, then since it is the Christ who will pronounce it, it will be because it must be and cannot be helped, but must be so in the nature of things. Therefore, we bow before this dreadful doctrine of Scripture and instead of trying to quiet men in their sins, we know the terrors of the Lord and we beseech them in Christ's stead that they be reconciled to God—

"You sinners, seek His face,
Whose wrath you cannot bear.
Fly to the shelter of His cross
And find salvation there."

Fly into the clefts of that rock which otherwise will grind you to powder when it falls upon you.

This doctrine too, that Christ is Judge, ought never to be forgotten because it reflects great glory upon Him. Ah, sons of men, you may despise Him, but He is your Master after all. You may say, "Let us break His bands asunder and cast His cords from us," but Jehovah's own decree has set Him as King upon His holy hill of Zion. You may, if you will, bite

your lips and rage and rave against the incarnate God, Jesus our Lord and King, but you shall stand before Him as surely as you live, to confess the blindness and the futility of your opposition and to be made to bow your knees in terror, if you will not bend them now in reverence. Yes, He is King. The world may say what it wills and there may come darker times than these, but the lone star gleams afar with undying brightness—the Star of the morning which ushers in the eternal day. Jesus comes and when He comes, light breaks for all that are on His side—and the black and murky darkness of an endless night shall descend on all that are His foes.

I close by noticing that the importance of this doctrine is very great if we recollect its beneficial effect upon our everyday life. I constantly hear silly people, wicked persons, say, "Tell the people about something that has to do with today—about cleanliness and honesty and all that."

As if we did not do that and as if we were not the first to exhort men to fulfill all manner of social duties. Do we not bid them think on whatsoever things are pure, honest, temperate, and of good repute? But if I want men to live righteously, soberly, and honestly, I know of no motive that can have greater weight with them than this of a judgment to come. Take that away from us, what have we to urge upon the sons of men at all? If they are to die like brutes, they will live like brutes. If there is no hereafter, they do well to say, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." This, though it looks like a future thing, is one of the present-day questions of every hour. You are stewards—you will have to give your account. Your Lord will come and question you as to your use of His goods. Will anybody in his senses tell me that this is unpractical? Surely every reasonable man will admit that for the promotion of right and truth and holiness, this is one of the most practical considerations that can possibly be found. If God will judge men at the last, it behooves men to see how they live today.

Another special benefit of this truth is its convincing and awakening power. Men tremble when they hear of judgment to come and they are led to cry, "What must we do to be saved?" Men begin to confess their sin when they are told that the law by which they will be judged is spiritual and reaches even to the thoughts and intents of the heart. "Then," they say, "who can stand before His presence when once He is angry? If even to think an evil thought or to lust an evil desire brings condemnation, who among us can stand when the heart-searching God shall sift the sons of men?" This is the reason why it ought to be preached, for only penitents convinced of sin are likely to accept the remission of sins. This is the plow which makes furrows for the good seed. This is the surgeon's knife which prepares for the reception of the healing balm.

And O, my brothers and sisters, you all know how quickening this doctrine is to Christians. We do not fear the Day of Judgment—we do not dread the thought of standing before our Lord Jesus because we have a plea which we know will answer every purpose. Our plea is this—we have been tried, condemned, and punished already. Judge of all, You know when we were tried, judged, and condemned! Lo, in Your hands are the

nail prints which are the witnesses that You did bear our sins in Your own body on the tree. Lo, at Your side You wear the ruby gem which tells how Your own heart made expiation for the guilt of all that trust in You. We are not afraid, for there is no judgment for him who is judged already. There is no punishment for him who is punished already in a Substitute whom God has accepted. Yet this expectation of judgment quickens us to holy duty—we feel that since the Master comes, we would be as men that look for their Lord and stand with our loins girded, doing service, expecting to hear His footstep at any moment—

"O watch and pray! The Judge is at the door,
Before His flaming bar you soon must stand.
O watch! And keep your garments spotless pure,
And then shall you be found at His right hand."

I shall be glad if any word that I have spoken upon this truth shall strike and stick and abide in your hearts—and make those think who have been most thoughtless concerning the world to come. Years ago a gentlewoman had been spending an afternoon at cards and the evening at a ball and such-like amusements. She came home very late and found that her maid-servant, who was sitting up waiting for her, was reading a book. "Ah," she said, "are you still poring over your dull books? They make you moping and melancholy." The lady retired to her chamber, but she slept not. In the night she was troubled and fell a-weeping. Sleep forsook her. She tossed to and fro and at length she called her maid. She said, "Madam, what ails you? I thought I left you very merry and well." "Oh," she said, "but I looked over your book and I only saw one word and that word stings me. I cannot sleep. I cannot bear it." "What word was it, Madam?" "It was that word, 'ETERNITY.' Oh, maid," she said, "it is very well for me to sport and play and waste my time as I have done, but oh, eternity, eternity, eternity! How can I face eternity?" And so that night was turned to weeping and to prayer. I could wish the same might happen now to many of you. The Judge is at the door. Jesus comes to judge you—will you have Him now to be your Savior? If not, His coming will cause you to weep and wail—and that throughout eternity. Remember that word, ETERNITY. God bless you all. Amen.

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JESUS ADMIRED IN THEM THAT BELIEVE
NO. 1477

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 1, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."
2 Thessalonians 1:10.

WHAT a difference between the first and second comings of our Lord! When He shall come a second time it will be to be glorified and admired, but when He came the first time it was to be despised and rejected of men. He comes a second time to reign with unexampled splendor, but the first time He came to die in circumstances of shame and sorrow. Lift up your eyes, you sons of light, and anticipate the change which will be as great for you as for your Lord—for now you are hidden even as He was hidden and misunderstood even as He was misunderstood when He walked among the sons of men. "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He; for we shall see Him as He is." His manifestation will be our manifestation and in the day in which He is revealed in glory, then shall His saints be glorified with Him.

Observe that our Lord is spoken of as coming in His glory and as, at the same time, taking vengeance in flaming fire on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel. This is a note of great terror to all those who are ignorant of God and wickedly unbelieving concerning His Christ. Let them take heed, for the Lord will gain glory by the overthrow of His enemies and those who would not bow before Him cheerfully shall be compelled to bow before Him abjectly. They shall crouch at His feet. They will lick the dust in terror and at the glance of His eyes they shall utterly wither away. As it is written, they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." But this is not the main object for which Christ will come, nor is this the matter in which He finds His chiefest glory, for, observe, He does this as it were by the way when He comes for another purpose. To destroy the wicked is a matter of necessity in which His spirit takes no delight, for He does this, according to the text, not so much when He comes to do it as when He shall come with another object, namely, "To be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in them that believe."

The crowning honor of Christ will be seen in His people and this is the design with which He will return to this earth in the latter days—that He may be illustrious in His saints and exceedingly magnified in them. Even now His saints glorify Him. When they walk in holiness they do, as it were, reflect His light. Their holy deeds are beams from Him who is the Sun of righteousness. When they believe in Him they also glorify Him, for there is no grace which pays lowlier homage at the throne of Jesus than the grace of faith whereby we trust Him and so confess Him to be our all

in all. We glorify our gracious Lord, but beloved brethren, we must all confess that we do not do this as we could desire, for, alas, too often we dishonor Him and grieve His Holy Spirit. By our lack of zeal and by our many sins we are guilty of discrediting His gospel and dishonoring His name. Happy, happy, happy day when this shall no more be possible—when we shall be rid of the inward corruption which now works itself into outward sin and shall never dishonor Christ again, but shall shine with a clear, pure radiance like the moon on the Passover night when it looks the sun full in the face and then shines upon the earth at her best. To-day we are like vessels on the wheel, but half fashioned, yet even now somewhat of His divine skill is seen in us as His handiwork. Still the unformed clay is only in part seen and much remains to be done. How much more of the great Potter's creating wisdom and sanctifying power will be displayed when we shall be the perfect products of His hand! In the bud and germ, our new nature brings honor to its Author, but it will do far more when its perfection manifests the Finisher. Then shall Jesus be glorified and admired in every one of us when the days of the new creation are ended and God shall usher in the eternal Sabbath by pronouncing His grace-work to be very good.

This morning, as God shall help me, I shall speak first of *the special glorification of Christ here intended,* and secondly, I shall conclude the sermon by calling your attention to *the special considerations which this grand truth suggests*.

I. Let us consider carefully THE SPECIAL GLORIFICATION HERE INTENDED. And the first point to note is *the time*. The text says, "When He shall come to be glorified in His saints." The full glorification of Christ in His saints will be when He shall come a second time according to the sure word of prophecy. He is glorified in them now, for He says, "All Mine are Yours and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them." But as yet that glory is perceptible to Himself rather than to the outer world. The lamps are being trimmed—they will shine before long. These are the days of preparation before that Sabbath which is in an infinite sense a high day. As it was said of Esther, that for so many months she prepared herself with myrrh and sweet odors before she entered the king's palace to be espoused of him, even so are we now being purified and made ready for that august day when the perfected church shall be presented unto Christ as a bride unto her husband. John says of her that she shall be "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." This is our night wherein we must watch, but behold, the morning comes—a morning without clouds—and then shall we walk in a seven-fold light because our Well-Beloved has come. That second advent of His will be His revelation—he was under a cloud here and men perceived Him not, save only a few who beheld His glory—but when He comes a second time, all veils will be removed and every eye shall see the glory of His countenance. For this He waits and His church waits with Him. We know not when the set time shall arrive, but every hour is bringing it nearer to us and therefore let us stand with loins girt, awaiting it.

Note, secondly, *in whom* this glorification of Christ is to be found. The text does not say He will be glorified "by" His saints, but *"in* His saints." There is a shade of difference, yes, more than a shade, between the two

terms. We endeavor to glorify Him now by our actions, but then He will be glorified in our own persons and character and condition. He is glorified *by* what we do, but He is at the last to be glorified in what we are. Who are these in whom Jesus is to be glorified and admired? They are spoken of under two descriptions, "in His saints," and "in all them that believe."

In "His saints" first. All those in whom Christ will be glorified are described as holy ones or saints—men and women who have been sanctified and made pure, whose gracious lives show that they have been under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, whose obedient actions prove that they are disciples of a Holy Master, even of Him who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." But inasmuch as these saints are also said to be believers, I gather that the holiness which will honor Christ at last is a holiness based on faith in Him, a holiness of which this was the root—that they first trusted in Christ and then being saved, they loved their Lord and obeyed Him. Their faith worked by love and purified their souls and so cleansed their lives. It is an inner as well as an outer purity arising out of the living and operative principle of faith. If any think that they can attain to holiness apart from faith in Christ, they are as much mistaken as he who should hope to reap a harvest without casting seed into the furrows. Faith is the bulb and saintship is the delightfully fragrant flower which comes of it when planted in the soil of a renewed heart. Beware, I pray you, of any pretense to a holiness arising out of yourselves and maintained by the energy of your own unaided wills—as well look to gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles. True saintship must spring from confidence in the Savior of sinners and if it does not, it is lacking in the first elements of truth. How can that be a perfect character which finds its basis in self-esteem? How could Christ be glorified by saints who refuse to trust in Him?

I would call your attention once again to the second description, "All them that believe." This is enlarged by the hint that they are believers in a certain testimony according to the bracketed sentence, "because our testimony among you was believed." Now, the testimony of the apostles was concerning Christ. They saw Him in the body and they bore witness that He was "God manifest in the flesh." They saw His holy life and they bore witness to it. They saw His death of grief and they witnessed that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." They saw Him risen from the dead and they said, "We are witnesses of His resurrection." They saw Him rise into heaven and they bore witness that God had taken Him up to His right hand. Now, all that believe this witness are saved. "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." All who with a simple faith come and cast themselves upon the incarnate God, living and dying for men and always sitting at the right hand of God to make intercession for them—these are the people in whom Christ will be glorified and admired at the last great day. But inasmuch as they are first said to be saints, be it never forgotten that this faith must be a living faith—a faith which produces a hatred of sin, a faith which renews the character and shapes the life after the noble model of Christ—thus turning sinners into saints. The two descriptions

must not be violently rent asunder. You must not say that the favored people are sanctified without remembering that they are justified by faith. Nor may you say that they are justified by faith without remembering that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, and that at the last the people in whom Christ will be admired will be those holy ones who were saved by faith in Him.

So far, then, we see our way, but now a question arises—*by whom* will Christ be thus glorified and admired? He shines in His people, but who will see the glory? I answer first, that His people will see it. Every saint will glorify Christ in himself and admire Christ in himself. He will say, "What a wonder that such a poor creature as I am should be thus perfected! How glorious is my Lord who has worked this miracle upon me!" Surely our consciousness of having been cleansed and made holy will cause us to fulfill those words of John Berridge which we sang just now—

"He cheers them with eternal smile,
They sing hosannas all the while.
Or, overwhelmed with rapture sweet,
Sink down adoring at His feet."

This I know, that when I personally enter heaven I shall forever admire and adore the everlasting love which brought me there. Yes, we will all glorify and admire our Savior for what He has worked in us by His infinite grace.

The saints will also admire Christ in one another. As I shall see you and you shall see your brethren and sisters in Christ all perfect, you will be filled with wonderment and gratitude and delight. You will be free from all envy and therefore you will rejoice in all the beauty of your fellow saints—their heaven will be a heaven to you—and what a multitude of heavens you will have as you will joy in the joy of all the redeemed! We shall as much admire the Lord's handiwork in others as in ourselves and shall each one praise Him for saving all the rest. You will see your Lord in all your brethren and this will make you praise and adore Him world without end with a perpetual amazement of ever-growing delight.

But that will not be all. Besides the blood-bought and ransomed of Christ, there will be on that great day of His coming all the holy angels to stand by and look on and wonder. They marveled much when first He stooped from heaven to earth and they desired to look into those things which then were a mystery to them. But when they shall see their beloved Prince come back with ten thousand times ten thousand of the ransomed at His feet—all of them made perfect by having washed their robes and made them white in His blood—how the principalities and powers will admire Him in every one of His redeemed! How they will praise that conquering arm which has brought home all these spoils from the war! How will the hosts of heaven shout His praises as they see Him lead all these captives captive with a new captivity in chains of love, joyfully gracing His triumph and showing forth the completeness of His victory!

We do not know what other races of innocent creatures there may be, but I think it is no stretch of the imagination to believe that as this world is only one speck in the creation of God, there may be millions of other races in the countless worlds around us—and all these may be invited to

behold the wonders of redeeming love as manifested in the saints in the day of the Lord. I seem to see these unfallen intelligences encompassing the saints as a cloud of witnesses and in rapt vision beholding in them the love and grace of the redeeming Lord. What songs! What shouts shall rise from all these to the praise of the ever-blessed God! What an orchestra of praise will the universe become! From star to star the holy hymn shall roll till all space shall ring out the hosannas of wondering spirits. "The Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," shall have brought home all that men wondered at and they with Himself shall be the wonder of eternity.

Then shall Satan and his defeated legions and the lost spirits of ungodly men bite their lips with envy and rage and tremble at the majesty of Jesus in that day. By their confessed defeat and manifest despair, they shall glorify Him in His people in whom they have been utterly overthrown. They shall see that there is not one lost whom He redeemed by blood, not one snatched away of all the sheep His Father gave Him, not one warrior enlisted beneath His banner fallen in the day of battle, but all more than conquerors through Him that loved them. What despair shall seize upon diabolic spirits as they discover their total defeat! Defeated in men who were once their slaves! Poor dupes whom they could so easily beguile by their craftiness—defeated even in these! Jesus, triumphant by taking the lambs from between the lion's jaws and rescuing His feeble sheep from their power, will utterly put them to shame in His redeemed. With what anguish will they sink into the hell prepared for them because now they hear with anger all earth and heaven and every star ringing with the shout—Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigns and the Lamb has conquered by His blood.

You see then that there are enough spectators to magnify Christ in His saints and so, fourthly, let us inquire *in what degree* will the Lord Jesus be glorified? Our answer is it will be to the very highest degree. He shall come to be glorified in His saints to the utmost, for this is clear from the words, "to be admired." When our translation was made, the word, "admired," had, to ordinary Englishmen, a stronger flavor of wonder than it has to us now. We often speak of admiring a thing in the softer sense of loving it, but the real meaning of the English word, and of the Greek also, is *wonder*—our Lord will be wondered at in all them that believe. Those who look upon the saints will feel a sudden wonderment of sacred delight. They will be startled with the surprising glory of the Lord's work in them. "We thought He would do great things, but this! This surpasses conception!" Every saint will be a wonder to himself. "I thought my bliss would be great, but not like this!" All his brethren will be a wonder to the perfected believer. He will say, "I thought the saints would be perfect, but I never imagined such a transfiguration of excessive glory would be put upon each of them. I could not have imagined my Lord to be so good and gracious." The angels in heaven will say that they never anticipated such deeds of grace—they knew that He had undertaken a great work—but they did not know that He would do so much for His people and in His people. The first-born sons of light, used to great marvels from of old, will be entranced with a new wonder as they see the handiwork of Immanuel's free grace and dying love. The men who once despised the saints,

who called them canting hypocrites and trampled on them and perhaps slew them—the kings and princes of the earth who sold the righteous for a pair of shoes—what will they say when they see the least of the Savior's followers become a prince of more illustrious rank than the great ones of the earth and Christ shining out in every one of these favored beings? For their uplifting Jesus will be wondered at by those who once despised both Him and them.

My next point leads us into the very heart of the subject—*in what respects* will Christ be glorified and wondered at? I cannot expect to tell you one tenth part of it. I am only going to give you a little sample of what this must mean—exhaustive exposition were quite impossible to me. I think with regard to His saints that Jesus will be glorified and wondered at on account of their number, "a number that no man can number." John was a great arithmetician and he managed to count up to 144,000 of all the tribes of the children of Israel, but that was only a representative number for the Jewish church. As for the church of God, comprehending the Gentile nations, he gave up all idea of computation and confessed that it is "a number which no man can number." When he heard them sing, he says, "I heard a voice like the voice of many waters and like great thunder." There were so many of them that their song was like the Mediterranean sea lashed to fury by a tempest—nay, not one great sea in uproar, but ocean upon ocean, the Atlantic and the Pacific piled upon each other, and the Arctic upon these, and other oceans upon these, layers of oceans—all thundering out their mightiest roar. And such will be the song of the redeemed, for the crowds which swell the matchless hymn will be beyond all reckoning. Behold and see, you who laughed at His kingdom. See how the little one has become a thousand. Now look, you foes of Christ who saw the handful of corn on the top of the mountains—see how the fruit shakes like Lebanon and they of the city do flourish like grass of the earth. Who can reckon the drops of the dew or the sands on the seashore? When they have counted these, then shall they not have guessed at the multitude of the redeemed that Christ shall bring to glory. And all this harvest from one grain of wheat, which, unless it had fallen into the ground and died, would have remained alone! What said the Word? "If it dies, it shall bring forth much fruit." Is not the prophecy fulfilled? Oh beloved, what a harvest from the lone Man of Nazareth! What fruit from that glorious Man—the Branch! Men esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted—and they made nothing of Him—and yet there sprang of Him (and He as good as dead) these multitudes which are as many as the stars of heaven. Is He not glorified and wondered at in them? The day shall declare it without fail.

But there is quality as well as quantity. He is admired in His saints because they are every one of them proofs of His power to save from evil. My eye can hardly bear, even though it is but in imagination, to gaze upon the glittering ranks of the white-robed ones where each one outshines the sun—and they are all as if a seven-fold midday had clothed them. Yet all these, as I look at them, tell me, "We have washed our robes—for they were once defiled. We have made them white—but this whiteness is caused by the blood of the Lamb." These were heirs of wrath even as others. These were dead in trespasses and sins. All these like sheep had

gone astray and turned, everyone to his own way, but look at them and see how He has saved them, washed them, cleansed them, perfected them! His power and grace are seen in all of them. If your eye will pause here and there, you will discover some that were supremely stubborn—whose neck was as an iron sinew—and yet He conquered them by love. Some were densely ignorant, but He opened their blind eyes. Some grossly infected with the leprosy of lust, but He healed them. Some under Satan's most terrible power, but He cast the devil out of them. Oh, how He will be glorified in special cases! In you drunkard, made into a saint, in you blasphemer, turned into a loving disciple, in you persecutor, who breathed out threatening, taught to sing everlastingly hymns of praise! He will be exceedingly glorified in such. Brethren, beloved in the Lord, in each one of us there was some special difficulty as to our salvation—some impossibility which was possible with God, though it would have been forever impossible with us.

Remember, also that all those saints made perfect would have been in hell had it not been for the Son's atoning sacrifice. This they will remember more vividly because they will see other men condemned for the sins with which they also were once polluted. The crash of vengeance upon the ungodly will make the saints magnify the Lord the more as they see themselves delivered. They will each feel—

"Oh were it not for grace divine,
That fate so dreadful had been mine."

In each one, the memory of the horrible pit where they were drawn and the miry clay out of which they were lifted shall make their Savior more glorified and wondered at.

Perhaps the chief point in which Christ will be glorified will be the absolute perfection of all the saints. They shall then be "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." We have not experienced what perfection is and therefore we can hardly conceive it. Our thoughts are too sinful for us to get a full idea of what absolute perfection must be, but dear brethren, we shall have no sin left in us, for they are "without fault before the throne of God" and we shall have no remaining propensity to sin. There shall be no bias in the will towards that which is evil, but it shall be fixed forever upon that which is good. The affections will never be wanton again—they will be chaste for Christ. The understanding will never make mistakes. You shall never put bitter for sweet, nor sweet for bitter. You shall be "perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," and truly, brethren, He who works this in us will be a wonder. Christ will be admired and adored because of this grand result. O mighty Master, with what strange moral alchemy did You work to turn that morose dispositioned man into a mass of love! How did You work to lift that selfish Mammonite up from his hoarded gains to make him find his gain in You? How did You overcome that proud spirit, that fickle spirit, that lazy spirit, that lustful spirit—how did You contrive to take all these away? How did You extirpate the very roots of sin and every little rootlet of sin out of your redeemed so that not a tiny fiber can be found? "The sins of Jacob shall be sought for and they shall not be found, yes, they shall not be, says the Lord." Neither the guilt of sin nor the propensity to sin—both

shall be gone—and Christ shall have done it and He will be "glorified in His saints and admired in them that believe."

This is but the beginning, however. There will be seen in every saint, in that last wondrous day, the wisdom and power and love of Christ in having brought them through all the trials of the way. He kept their faith alive when else it would have died out. He sustained them under trials when else they would have fainted. He held them fast in their integrity when temptation solicited them and they had almost slipped with their feet. Ay, He sustained some of them in prison, on the rack, at the stake, and still kept them faithful still! One might hardly wish to be a martyr, but I reckon that the martyrs will be the admiration of us all or rather Christ will be admired in them. However they could bear such pain as some of them did for Christ's sake, none of us can guess, except that we know that Christ was in them suffering in His members. Eternally will Jesus be wondered at in them as all intelligent spirits shall see how He upheld them so that neither tribulation, nor distress, nor nakedness, nor famine, nor sword could separate them from His love. These are the men that wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy—but now they stand arrayed as kings and priests in surpassing glory forever. Verily, their Lord shall be admired in them. Don't you agree?

Recollect, dear friends, that we shall see in that day how the blessed Christ, as "Head over all things to His church," has ruled every providence to the sanctification of His people—how the dark days begat showers which made the plants of the Lord to grow, how the fierce sun which threatened to scorch them to the root filled them with warmth of love divine and ripened their choice fruit. What a tale the saints will have to tell of how that which threatened to damp the fire of grace made it burn more mightily, how the stone which threatened to kill their faith was turned into bread for them, how the rod and staff of the Good Shepherd was ever with them to bring them safely home. I have sometimes thought that if I get into heaven by the skin of my teeth I will sit down on the glory shore and bless Him forever who, on a board or on a broken piece of the ship, brought my soul safe to land, and surely they who obtain an abundant entrance, coming into the fair havens, like a ship in full sail without danger of shipwreck, will have to praise the Lord that they thus came into the blessed port of peace. In each case, the Lord will be specially glorified and admired.

I cannot stop over this, but I must beg you to notice that as a king is glorious in his regalia, so will Christ put on His saints as His personal splendor in that day when He shall make up His jewels. It is with Christ as it was with that noble Roman matron who, when she called at her friends' houses and saw their trinkets, asked them to come next day to her house and she would exhibit her jewels. They expected to see ruby and pearl and diamond, but she called in her two boys and said, "These are my jewels." Even so will Jesus, instead of emerald and amethyst and onyx and topaz, exhibit His saints. "These are My choice treasures," He says, "in whom I will be glorified." Solomon surely was never more full of glory than when he had finished the temple—when all the tribes came together to see the noble structure and confessed it to be "Beautiful for

situation, the joy of the whole earth." But what will be the glory of Christ when all the living stones shall be put into their places and His church shall have her windows of agates and her gates of carbuncle and all her borders of precious stones. Then indeed will He be glorified, when the 12 foundations of His new Jerusalem shall be courses of stones most precious, the like of which was never seen.

Now, inasmuch as my text lays special stress upon *believing*, I invite you just for a minute to consider how as believers as well as saints, the saved ones will glorify their Lord.

First, it will be wonderful that there should be so many brought to faith in Him—men with no God and men with many gods; men steeped in ignorance and men puffed up with carnal wisdom, great men and poor men—all brought to believe in the one Redeemer and praise Him for His great salvation. Will He not be glorified in their common faith? It will magnify Him that these will all be saved by faith and not by their own merits. Not one among them will boast that he was saved by his own good works, but all of them will rejoice to have been saved by that blessedly simple way of "Believe and live," saved by sovereign grace through the atoning blood—looked to by the tearful eye of simple faith. This too shall make Jesus glorious, that all of them, weak as they were, were made strong by faith. All of them personally unfit for battle were yet made triumphant in conflict because by faith they overcame through the blood of the Lamb. All of them shall be there to show that their faith was honored, that Christ was faithful to His promise and never allowed them to believe in vain. All of them standing in heavenly places, saved by faith, will ascribe every particle of the glory to the Lord Jesus only—

> "***I ask them where their victory came?***
> ***They, with united breath,***
> ***Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,***
> ***Their triumph to His death."***

They believed and were saved, but faith takes no credit to itself—it is a self-denying grace—and puts the crown upon the head of Christ and therefore is it written that He will be glorified in His saints and He will also be admired in all them that believe.

I have scarcely skirted the subject even now, and time is failing me. I want you to reflect that Jesus will be glorified in the risen bodies of all His saints. Now, in heaven they are pure spirits, but when He shall come, they shall be clothed again. Poor body, you must sleep awhile, but what you shall be at your awaking does not yet appear. You are now the shriveled seed, but there is a flower to come of you which shall be lovely beyond all thought. Though sown in weakness, this body shall be raised in power. Though sown in corruption, it shall be raised in incorruption. Weakness, weariness, pain, and death will be banished forever. Infirmity and deformity will be all unknown. The Lord will raise up our bodies to be like unto His glorious body. Oh, what a prospect lies before us! Let us remember that this blessed resurrection will come to us because He rose, for there must be a resurrection to the members because the Head has risen. Oh, the charm of being a risen man, perfect in body, soul, and spirit! All that charm will be due to Christ and therefore He will be admired in us.

Then let us think of the absolute perfection of the church as to numbers—all who have believed in Him will be with Him in glory. The text says He will be "admired in *all* them that believe." Now, if some of those who believe perished, He would not be admired in them—but they will all be there, the little ones as well as the great ones. You will be there, you poor feeble folk who, when you say, "Lord, I believe," are obliged to add, "help You my unbelief." He shall be admired in all believers without a single exception and perhaps there shall be more wonder at the going to heaven of the weak believers than at the stronger ones. Mr. Greatheart, when he comes there, will owe his victories to his Master and lay his laurels at His feet. But fainting Feeblemind and limping Ready-to-Halt with his crutches and trembling Little-Faith—when they enter into rest, will make heaven ring with notes of even greater admiration that such poor creeping worms of the earth should win the day by mighty grace. Suppose that one of them should be missing at the last! Stop the harps! Silence the songs! No beginning to be merry while one child is shut out! I am quite certain if as a family we were going to sing our evening hymn of joy and thankfulness, if mother said, "Where is the little mite? Where is the last one of the family?" There would be a pause. If we had to say—she is lost—there would be no singing and no resting till she was found. It is the glory of Jesus that as a shepherd He has lost none of His flock. As the Captain of salvation, He has brought many sons to glory and has lost none—and hence He is admired, not in some that believe, nor yet in all but one—but He is "admired in *all* them that believe."

Does not this delight you, you who are weak and trembling, that He will be admired in you? There is little to admire in you at present, as you penitently confess, but since Christ is in you now and will be more fully manifested in you, there will be before long much to admire. May you partake in the excellence of our divine Lord and be conformed to His likeness that He may be seen in you and glorified in you.

Another point of admiration will be the eternal safety of all His believing people. There they are safe from fear of harm. You dogs of hell, you howled at their heels and hoped to devour them, but lo, they are clean escaped from you! What must it be to be lifted above gunshot of the enemy where no more watch shall need to be kept, for even the roar of the satanic artillery cannot be heard? Oh glorious Christ, to bring them all to such a state of safety, You are indeed to be wondered at forever.

Moreover, all the saints will be so honored, so happy, and so like their Lord that themselves and everything about them will be themes for never-ending admiration. You may have seen a room hung round with mirrors and when you stood in the midst you were reflected from every point—you were seen here and seen there and there again and there again—and so every part of you was reflected. Just such is heaven. Jesus is the center and all His saints like mirrors reflect His glory. Is He human? So are they! Is He the Son of God? So are they sons of God! Is He perfect? So are they! Is He exalted? So are they! Is He a Prophet? So are they, making known unto principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God. Is He a Priest? So are they! Is He a King? SO are they, for He has made us priests and kings unto God and we shall reign forever and ever.

Look where you will along the ranks of the redeemed, this one thing shall be seen—the glory of Christ Jesus, even to surprise and wonder.

II. I have no time to make those SUGGESTIONS with which I intended to have finished and so I will just tell you what they would have been.

First, the text suggests that the principal subject for self-examination with us all should be—Am I a saint? Am I holy? Am I a believer in Christ? Yes or no, for on that yes or no must hang your glorification by Christ or your banishment from His presence.

The next thing is—observe the small value of human opinion. When Christ was here, the world reckoned Him to be a nobody and while His people are here they must expect to be judged in the same way. What do worldlings know about it? How soon will their judgment be reversed! When our Lord shall appear, even those who sneered will be compelled to admire. When they shall see the glory of Christ in every one of His people, awe-stricken, they will have nothing to say against us—nay, not even the false tongue of malicious slander shall dare to hiss out a serpent word in that day. Never mind them, then. Put up with reproach which shall so soon be silenced.

The next suggestion is a great encouragement to inquirers who are seeking Christ, for I put it to you, you great sinners—if Jesus is to be glorified in saved sinners, would He not be glorified indeed if He saved you? If He were ever to save such a rebel as you have been, would it not be the astonishment of eternity? I mean you who are known in the village as Wicked Jack or known as a common swearer—what if my Master were to make a saint of you! Bad raw material! Yet suppose He transformed you into a precious jewel and made you to be as holy as God is holy—what would you say of Him? "Say of Him," you say, "I would praise Him world without end." Yes, and you shall do so if you will come and trust Him. Put your trust in Him. The Lord help you to do so at once and He shall be admired even in you forever and ever.

Our text also gives an exhortation to believers. Will Jesus Christ be honored and glorified in all the saints? Then let us think well of them all and love them all. Some dear children of God have uncomely bodies or they are blind or deformed or maimed, and many of these have scanty purses and it may be the church knows most of them as coming for alms. Moreover, they have little knowledge, little power to please, and they are uncouth in manners and belong to what are called the lowest ranks of society—do not, therefore, despise them—for one day our Lord will be glorified in them. How He will be admired in yonder poor bedridden woman when she rises from the workhouse to sing hallelujah to God and the Lamb among the brightest of the shining ones. Why, I think the pain, the poverty, the weakness, and the sorrow of saints below will greatly glorify the Captain of their salvation as they tell how grace helped them to bear their burdens and to rejoice under their afflictions.

Lastly, brethren, this text ought to encourage all of you who love Jesus to go on talking about Him to others and bearing your testimony for His name. You see how the apostle Paul has inserted a few words by way of parenthesis? Draw the words out of the brackets and take them home, "Because our testimony among you was believed." Do you see those crowds of idolatrous heathens and do you see those hosts of saved ones

before the throne of God? What is the medium which linked the two characters? By what visible means did the sinners become saints? Do you see that insignificant looking man with weak eyes? That man whose bodily presence is weak and whose speech is contemptible? Do you not see his bodkin and needle case? He has been making and mending tents, for he is only a tent-maker. Now, those bright spirits which shine like suns, flashing forth Christ's glory, were made thus bright through the addresses and prayers of that tent-maker. The Thessalonians were heathens plunged in sin and this poor tent-maker came in among them and told them of Jesus Christ and His gospel. His testimony was believed and that belief changed the lives of his hearers and made them holy—and they being renewed came at last to be perfectly holy and there they are—and Jesus Christ is glorified in them.

Beloved, will it not be a delightful thing throughout eternity to contemplate that you went into your Sunday school class this afternoon and you were afraid you could not say much, but you talked about Jesus Christ with a tear in your eye and you brought a dear girl to believe in His saving name through your testimony? In years to come, that girl will be among those that shine out to the glory of Christ forever. Or you will get away this evening, perhaps, to talk in a lodging house to some of those poor, despised tramps. You will go and tell one of those poor vagrants or one of the fallen women the story of your Lord's love and blood—and the poor broken heart will catch at the gracious word and come to Jesus—and then a heavenly character will be begun and another jewel secured for the Redeemer's diadem. I think you will admire His crown all the more because as you see certain stones sparkling in it, you will say, "Blessed be His name forever. He helped me to dive into the sea and find that pearl for Him and now it adorns His sacred brow." Now, get at it, all of you! You that are doing nothing for Jesus, be ashamed of yourselves and ask Him to work in you that you may begin to work for Him and unto God shall be the glory forever and ever. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
2 THESSALONIANS 1:11.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—92, 873, 861.

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GREATER THINGS, YET WHO SHALL SEE THEM?
NO. 1478

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 8, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these. And He said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Henceforth you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."
John 1:50, 51.

WE cannot help making a few remarks upon the narrative before we proceed to the distinct subject of discourse. Certain catch words are exceedingly worthy of notice since they are abundantly full of instruction. When Nathanael had doubts as to whether the Messiah could come from Nazareth, Philip answered Him, "Come and see." Now, those were the precise words which the Lord Jesus had Himself used to His earliest disciples when they began to follow Him—He also said to them, "Come and see." It is always safe for us to use over again words which God has blessed. Did the Master say, "Come and see"? Then we cannot do better than say what Jesus said and use as near as possible the inspired expressions. Was that short sentence, "Come and see," made useful to other souls? Then those who would win souls cannot do better than use such gospel nets as have been tried and proven efficient in their own cases. Let none of us say that we cannot speak to others about their souls. There was one passage of Scripture which was the means of our conversion and we cannot do better than repeat it in hearty tones to others, hoping that what God has blessed to us, He may bless to others.

Short as was the inviting word, "Come and see," it was full of wisdom. Our Lord knows the philosophy of the human mind and understands how best to produce faith in doubting hearts. "Come and see" is the sure cure for unbelief. Some would tell doubters to sit down and think and create faith by reflecting on the nature of things. We may long consider the state of man and the condition of our own nature before we shall thereby be enlightened as to the way of salvation. If we would judge of Christ, we must consider Christ Himself. He is His own best argument. The cobweb spinnings of conceited brains are easily broken through, but the facts, the indisputable facts of the Savior's life and death hold the understanding and the heart as with iron bands. As our Savior said and as His servant Philip said, even so say we to all who would know Christ, "Come and see". Be not blinded by prejudices or misled by preconceptions, but read His story for yourselves. Seek His face for yourselves and taste and see that the Lord is good. Personal communion with Jesus is still the best evidence of His personal excellence and His power to save. Brother, have you any doubt about the Master? "Come and see." Do you

say within yourself, "Can He save such a one as I am?" "Come and see." Do your sins cast you down and cause you to despair because you fear that even the Redeemer's blood cannot cleanse you? "Come and see." See Him as the Son of God and the Son of man, in His life of holiness, and in His death of substitution. Or see Him, if you will, up yonder at the right hand of God, making intercession for sinners. And as you are looking upon Him, faith will steal in upon you through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the mind's eye that must look and by that look, repentance and faith find entrance to the soul. "Come and see," for nothing will save a man but a personal sight of a personal Savior. Therefore, "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world." The Lord Himself says, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth."

Our Lord Jesus Christ seems to have so approved of the advice of Philip that He Himself followed it up and kept to the same form of expression. Did Philip say, "Come and see"? Then the Lord Jesus says, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I *saw you*: you have come to see *Me*, but I have already seen *you:* there has been an antecedent look on My part: I saw you before you did know anything about Me, or had even heard of Me from Philip." Nor does our Lord change His note even to the end of the conversation, but closes it by saying, "Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? *You shall see* greater things than these." There, you see, is the great plan of salvation as it is worked in us. First the Savior sees us, even when we are a great way off. Then we come and see and our hearts find rest in our Redeemer. And then, in later days, He gives us yet brighter and clearer views of Himself and of His Kingdom. Oh, who would not come and see if this is so? If at our first coming and seeing we find life and rest, what must those still greater things be which are yet to be revealed? All that faith has yet discovered is but a foretaste and an earnest of more glorious sights which shall yet be opened up before our favored eyes, for Jesus Himself says, "You shall see greater things than these."

Other parts of the conversation are equally worthy of notice, as showing how fully the mind of the childlike Nathanael and the holy child Jesus responded to each other, as all true and childlike minds always do. Our Lord, as soon as He saw Nathanael, called him, "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." Jesus knew his simple, frank, open-hearted character and he produced an example of it, for Nathanael did not blush with mock modesty and pretend to question the praise, but in the simplest and most unaffected manner, he tacitly admitted the description to be true and said, "From where do You know me?" He felt in his own conscience that he was a true son of that wrestling Jacob who became prevailing Israel and in owning the title, he made his words responsive to those of Jesus, for he said in effect, "True, I am an Israelite, but You are the King of Israel." To this our Lord seemed to reply, "You are an Israelite and you have owned Israel's King and now you shall have Israel's privileges for, like him you shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Thus, as in water face answers to face, so did the heart of man to man in the communion of these two guileless spirits. Their thoughts were so true that they harmonized like the parts of well-composed music. Their words so frankly be-

spoke their hearts that they answered to one another like the echo to the voice. This is the character of the communion between our Master and His sanctified ones. He says, "I am the Good Shepherd," and the heart replies, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." The spouse says, "Yes, He is altogether lovely," and her Bridegroom replies, "You are all fair, My love, there is no spot in you." Our Lord calls us, "My love, My dove, My undefiled," and we, being in full communion with Him, reply, "My Beloved is mine and I am His." As upon the sea in time of storm, deep calls unto deep, so within the sanctified heart in heavenly calm, truth calls unto truth—one word of love wakes up another—the commendation given by condescending love brings forth the praise of grateful affection. But to produce this mutual sympathy there must be a common character, a similar absence of guile, for this is the great condition of fellowship with Jesus. God's ways towards us are made to meet our own in a most instructive way. "With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful. With an upright man You will show Yourself upright. With the pure You will show Yourself pure and with the obstinate You will show Yourself obstinate." When His children open their hearts to Him, He opens His mind to them. When they are true Israelites, He gives them the true Israel's privileges. When they own Him to be a great and glorious King, He makes them to see the great things of His kingdom. May it be ours through grace to be as little children, even as Nathanael was, for so shall we behold the kingdom of God.

With those prefatory remarks we come at length to consider the promise of our Lord Jesus to Nathanael. May the Holy Spirit instruct us thereby. I think I am warranted in saying that this is the Savior's first personal word of promise and it is instructive that He gave it, not to the most talented, but to the most simple-hearted of His disciples. It was moreover no mean promise, but full of the largest conceivable meaning. "You shall see greater things than these." Those must be very great things which were greater than what Nathanael had already seen—there is room for boundless expectation in the words. It was promise which brought another linked with it as part and parcel of it. How often one divine blessing is like a link of a chain of gold and draws another with it, "You shall see greater things than these" is followed by, "Henceforth you shall see heaven open." The beauty of it in this instance is, that albeit Nathanael obtained a promise for himself at first, "*You* shall see," yet this drew on the promise for all his brethren, for the 51st verse does not run, "hereafter or henceforth thou shalt see heaven open," but henceforth, "shall *ye* see heaven open." It is a great thing to receive a personal promise, but it is a greater thing, still, to secure a promise for all our Master's household. Happy Nathanael to have been the occasion for the proclamation of the opening of heaven and the commerce between heaven and earth, and the communion of saints with the things in heaven through their Mediator and Lord; this is the highest form of blessing when we are not only favored ourselves, but are made the occasion for enriching others. Was not this the choice inheritance of Abraham, "I will bless you and you shall be a blessing"?

In considering the words which our Savior spoke to Nathanael, I should like you to notice first, *the favored man* to whom He spoke them.

Then the *gracious reward* which is described in them. And lastly, *the special sight* comprised in that reward. In all this may we be actual partakers and not mere lookers on.

I. Let us think of THIS FAVORED MAN. Nathanael was "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." He was one of those who were not only of the chosen seed after the flesh, but after the Spirit. He was noted for being a simple-minded, unsophisticated person—as honest as the day. He was a truthful man who knew nothing of policy, or craft, or double dealing, or reserve. He was a man out of whom all the twists had been taken—an upright and downright man—true to the core and transparent as clear glass! He was not a Jacobite, a child of the crafty supplanter, but an Israelite, an Israelite indeed, with the Jacob extracted out of him. He was pure, simple-hearted, ingenuous—not childish, but yet thoroughly childlike. To such a man the word was given, "You shall see greater things than these."

Notice, first, that *he was a man who honestly made inquiries which fairly suggested themselves*. Before he became a believer, he did not, as some do, invent doubts and raise questions, which questions are merely raised for question's sake. He did not put queries to Philip which he could have answered himself, nor seek to entangle his instructor by artful speech. Nothing of the sort. He sought truth, not controversy and word-chopping. The two questions which he put came out of his heart and were points which seemed to him to be vital. He did not go about to discover difficulties, but they occurred to him then and there and he spoke them out with honest plainness. He was told that the Messiah had been found and that He was Jesus of Nazareth. I doubt not he was well acquainted with Holy Writ and he did not recollect any text in which the Christ was said to come out of Nazareth and therefore he thought within himself, "I read of Bethlehem Ephratah, that out of it shall He come forth who is to be ruler in Israel, but I do not remember a word concerning Nazareth." Without a moment's hesitation, he put the question, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" It was a poor, miserable little place of unsavory reputation. This, then, was a difficulty—a true and real difficulty—and he stated it and was content to, "Come and see." When the Savior met him with the words, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile," he inquired, "From where do You know me?" A most natural question to ask, for on its answer would depend the value of the words. Might it not happen that this accurate description of himself might have come to Jesus by report? If a correct description of Nathanael's character had reached the Savior by Philip or any other friend, then it did not prove anything, but if Jesus knew it by His own perception and could read the character of a man to whom He was a stranger, then Nathanael knew what conclusion to draw. So he only asks the question because it ought to be asked and not meant to be a trick question. How I love to meet with seekers who, though they are in difficulties, are willing to be led out of them and are not studying how to invent more. Some of you cannot find peace in Christ because you willfully darken the atmosphere around yourselves. You are not assailed by doubt, but you invite doubt to assail you. You believe a great deal more than you like to own to, but you do not want to believe and are fishing for excuses for your unbelief. It is a

sad state of mind for a man to be in—to be trying to discover reasons why he should not be saved—but that is what many are doing. That is a wretched mind which manufactures difficulties and complicates plain things because it cannot or will not take a thing in its straightforward, simple meaning, but must be puzzled and perplexed. Some men are too intellectual to believe the poor man's gospel—the run and read gospel—the gospel of, "Believe and live." They must needs be mystified, or excited, or driven to despair—or else they refuse to believe. There is a craving in some men for something that will appall them and fill them with despair. Is not this folly? Wait not for such sensations, I pray you. If you do, you will miss the blessing. But if, even while as yet you have not received full faith, you are honest enough to admit of none but honest difficulties, there is in you some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel and the Lord is praised for it.

This Nathanael without guile was, next, *a man who honestly yielded to the force of truth*. Omniscience was proven to be an attribute of Christ to Nathanael by the pointed remark which Jesus addressed to him. What was Nathanael doing under the fig tree? "I know," says one, "for I have heard it said he was praying." Well, I did not say he was *not* praying, but I will defy anybody to prove that he was. What was Nathanael doing under the fig tree? We frequently read in the Talmudic writers of learned rabbis who studied the law under the fig tree. Was Nathanael studying the law? I did not say he was not, but I will defy anybody to prove that he was. What was he doing under the fig tree? There are only two people who could have told us and both of these are silent on the matter. Both Jesus and Nathanael knew, but no one else. What he was doing under the fig tree we may not pretend to guess, for it is more instructive to leave it in the dark—our Lord's words were a kind of secret sign to Nathanael, all the more conclusive because perfectly unknown and uninterpreted by the rest of mankind. Whether he was going to be baptized by John the Baptist and sat down there to think of what he was doing or whether, having been baptized, being on the way home, he suddenly felt an impression that he must sit in that place and wait—he knew not why—I may not profess to know. But it was an important movement to his own mind and he remembered it as such. As soon as Jesus said, with a look, "When you were under the fig tree," Nathanael was startled into a conviction that his secret heart was known to Jesus. Under that tree he had done or said or thought something known only to himself. How had the person before him known of that deed? It was true that his deed or word or thought under the fig tree was a pure, simple, and honest one, but how did Jesus know? "If He knows that I was under the fig tree and knows what I was doing there, and if He read my simple-minded, guileless character when I was there, then He is the Son of God, the King of Israel." This was Nathanael's immediate conclusion and the argument was very clear and complete. Similar reasoning was used by others soon after Nathanael's conversion and with the same result. When our Lord said to the woman of Samaria, "Go, call your husband and come here," and she replied, "I have no husband," He answered, "You have well said, I have no husband, for you have had five husbands and he whom you now have is not your husband: in that said you truly." Then the woman

said, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" It was good argument, for omniscience proves Godhead. An omniscient one here in human flesh among the sons of men must be the Anointed of God. He must be the Lord's Christ. I do not know whether Nathanael recollected the passage of Scripture, but this was the kind of argument used by the great God Himself when He proved Himself to be God in Isaiah 44:5. Notice how the passage, in many of its words, is parallel to our text. One shall say, I am the Lord's and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel. "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and His Redeemer, the Lord of hosts; I am the first and I am the last; and beside Me there is no God." And what is the proof of it? "Who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people? And the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them." He challenges the false gods to tell what was being done in secret places and what was to be done in the future and He gives this as a proof of His Godhead. The heathen oracles attempted prophecy because they saw how clearly it would prove the existence of their gods. Our Lord is a discerner of hearts, reading them as a scholar scans his book and we know Him to be our God. Nathanael had drunk into the very essence of that wonderful 139th Psalm. No greater proof of Godhead can be given than the fact that all things are naked and open before the Lord. "O Lord, You have searched me. You know my sitting down and my rising up. You understand my thoughts afar off." When I sat under the fig tree You did read my heart. "You compass my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, You know it altogether. You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your presence?" All this, you see, is a manifestation of Godhead. Nathanael argued, therefore, "He saw me when nobody else did. He read my character in a simple act, an act which other people might have misunderstood and thought me a fool for it. He perceived the uprightness of my heart and now I know that He is certainly divine."

Notice, further, the blessing of our text comes to a man who in *simple honesty believes much upon the evidence of one assured fact*. It is proven that Christ can see in secret and read men's hearts—and from this, in addition to His divinity, Nathanael infers that "He is a great Teacher"—and he makes his first confession of faith by calling Him, "Rabbi." He is sure that He who knows all things is worthy to be a teacher and he gives Him the teacher's title. Then, as we have already said, he perceives that if He is omniscient, He is divine and he makes the confession, "You are the Son of God." And not satisfied with that, he sees that if He is indeed the Son of God, He must be Ruler and Lord and therefore he calls Him the King of Israel. See here how he drinks into the spirit of the second psalm, where Son and King are the two great notes of harmony. "Yet have I set *My king* upon My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The Lord has said unto Me, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You. Kiss *the Son* lest He is angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." Gladly does

Nathanael submit Himself to the Son and proclaim Him King of Israel. Was not this the first time that our Lord had been actually proclaimed as King since He had come into His public ministry? Was not this the answer to the wise men's question when they followed His star from regions far remote? Here was He who was born King of the Jews. This guileless man, who seemed to lack shrewdness, had seen more than his fellows. His eye, undimmed by falsehood or suspicion, had seen the King, though His humiliation had unclothed Him of His royal mantle and taken off His crown.

See then, beloved, that the gist of our first head is this—It is the pure in heart that shall see God. We must be honest and sincere. We must be clear of all subtlety and craft. We must be transparent as glass before Him or else the Lord will not reveal Himself to us or by us. He loves the guileless and the true—and when He has made our eye single, He will fill us with light, but not till then.

Note, again, that those who are ready to believe upon sure evidence—for Nathanael wanted that—are the men who shall see more and more. Nathanael did not require the evidence to be repeated to Him again and again—he saw the argument at once and yielded himself to it. When a point is once proved, it is proved—and there is an end of it. One conclusive argument is as good as 20 to an unsophisticated mind. Those who are willing to see shall see. Heaven is open to those from whose eyes the scales of prejudice are removed. The Lord manifests Himself to those who manifest themselves to Him. If you will be Christians of the highest type, you must be true to the core and you must realize Christ and believe in Him with that mighty faith which sees Him and realizes Him as close at hand. The presence and the power of Jesus must be undoubted by your soul—it must be as much a matter of fact to you as your own existence—and yours shall be the words which we are now about to consider—"You shall see greater things than these."

II. Let us now look at THE GRACIOIUS REWARD. Only a few words upon it. Because this simple-hearted man had believed upon the one argument of the Lord's discernment of his heart, he was favored with the promise of seeing greater things. By these words our Lord meant that *his perceptions would become more vivid.* Do you believe? You shall see. If we demand to see first, we shall never believe, but if we are willing to believe, we shall by-and-by see. There is a growth in faith which renders it not the less faith and yet approximates it more and more nearly to sense. I mean "sense" in its best signification—so that what at first we believe, simply upon the testimony of God, we come by-and-by to believe upon personal experience. We believe until we so realize the object of faith that we look at the things which are not seen and see Him who is invisible. From this we go further still until we both taste and handle of the good word of life and faith becomes the substance of things hoped for. From looking to Christ, we come to live and move and have our being in Him. The eye of faith gathers strength. At first it sees Christ through its tears and that look saves the soul, though it perceives comparatively little of Him, but in later days the eye of faith becomes so powerful that it emulates that of the eagle which can gaze upon the sun at midday. Thus faith becomes a second sight. Remember our Lord's words to Martha,

"Said I not unto you, that if you would believe you should see the glory of God?" "Do you believe? You shall see."

This was not all our Lord's meaning. He virtually promised that Nathanael *should discover other truths than he as yet knew*. "You shall see greater things than these." Now, what is there greater to be seen than the omniscience of Christ? "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high: I cannot attain unto it." Is there anything greater than this? Yes, so the Savior says. I suppose He means this—First, as you have seen My omniscience in your own case, you shall go on to see it in the case of all mankind, for by My cross shall the thoughts of many hearts be revealed and by My gospel shall men be revealed unto themselves. The Word of God is quick and powerful and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart—and when Nathanael came to preach it in later years, he found it so and saw for himself that Christ read every man's heart. HOW wonderfully do we know this to be true in our time and in this place, for here the Word finds us out and lays us bare to our own consciences. You have been startled in your seats sometimes. You have wondered how it could be that not only in the gross has your experience been set before you, but even in little details there have been minute touches which have amazed you with the distinctness of the divine knowledge. Our Lord did not say, "I saw you under a tree," as if it might have been an oak or an olive, but He spoke definitely of "the fig tree." Even so does He cause His ministers to be very minute and particular so that you wonder where their knowledge comes from. Now, when this is done on a large scale—as it is done whenever Christ is preached—then is it true that we see greater things than when, for the first time, we perceive that our own character is revealed.

He would see "greater things," next, because *he would see more of the Godhead*. Did you see omniscience? You shall see omnipotence. Did you discover that I could read your heart? You shall learn that I can change your heart. Did you find that My eye could glance into the secret of your soul? You shall find My Word casting out devils and healing the sick and hushing the storms. You shall see clearer ensigns of My Godhead than this one experiment in the reading of the heart.

The Lord, in calling Himself the Son of man, opens up to Nathanael one of those greater things. He had perceived Him to be the Son of God by His reading his heart and it was a great thing to perceive the Godhead, but it was a greater wonder still to see that Godhead linked with humanity. Jesus, as Son of God, is glorious, but at the same time as Son of man, He has a double glory. Our Lord seemed to say to Nathanael, "You have believed that I am the Son of God—you shall see the Son of man." And is this a greater thing? In one sense, it is a descent for Jesus to be the Son of man, but yet you who know how to read the riddle aright will say that the Godhead is not half so wonderful in itself as when it comes to be united with our humanity. The incarnation has about it a mystery which is not seen, even in the mystery of the Godhead. That there should be a God, heathens might spell out—but that this God should come in human flesh among us—this is the mystery which angels desired to look into. Nor may I forget that the idea of our Lord as *King of Israel* is not so great as His connection with all nations, which is displayed in His title, Son of

man. He is not confined in His grace to Israel, as Nathanael probably thought, but He is brother to our entire humanity. Here was another of the greater things.

Note further that Nathanael had only seen an opened heart, but now he was to see *an opened heaven*. He had seen Christ's eye entering into his secrets, but he was now to see communications established between the lowly hearts of men and the secrets of heaven. He saw how Christ, Son of God, dwelt among men—he is now to see how the abodes of God and man shall be blended in one and high communion maintained between earth and heaven.

I come back to the one thought, that the sight of greater things is reserved for guileless believers. To those who already have much by faith, more shall be given. Beloved, as a church and people, we have seen great things in this place in the work of the Lord among us, and we have lately celebrated with much joy and thankfulness the loving kindness of the Lord to us—let us make this a new starting point and hear the Lord say, "From this day will I bless you." We desire to see much greater things than we have known and in order to this, we must have more faith. And that faith must be more simple and childlike. The rule of the kingdom is that according to our faith, so shall it be unto us. Unbelief bars the way of mercy. We tie the hands of Jesus if we have not faith. Is it not written, "He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief"? We must believe or we shall not be established, nor shall our work prosper. Whatever we have accomplished has been worked by faith, but we believe that we might have done a hundred times more if we had manifested a hundred times as much faith. May the Lord give us downright, honest, simple faith and then we shall see greater things than these, for all obstacles will be removed and eternal love will work wonders among us. Faith makes a man a fit instrument for God to use and therefore God does great things by him. If you are unbelieving, God will no more use you than a warrior would use a reed for a weapon. He works no wonders by unbelieving ministers and unbelieving churches, for these are not prepared to be blessed—they are not vessels fit for the Master's use—rust is upon them of the worst kind. When your heart is resting in the Lord, expecting to see His arm made bare and quietly waiting to see how He will glorify Himself and fulfill His promise, then will you see greater things. When faith fails, it disqualifies us and sets us aside even as in the case of Moses and Aaron, to whom the Lord said, "Because you believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation unto the land which I have given them."

We must have faith, for faith fulfils the condition which is virtually appended to every promise. Has not the Lord promised to answer the prayers of those who cry unto Him believingly? But as for the wavering, He has said, "Let not that man expect to receive anything of the Lord." Is not faith our very life? "The just shall live by faith." Is it not our entrance into blessedness? We see that Israel in the wilderness could not enter into Canaan because of unbelief. All the promises are for believers—there are none for unbelievers. "As you have believed so be it unto you," stands as the measure of blessing—there is no other limit.

Strong faith, coupled with a guileless character, brings a man into the special, pleasing love of God, for, albeit that He loves all His elect, He does not delight in all alike. There were apostles among the disciples—there were three choice ones out of the twelve—there was one peculiar favorite out of the three. He is dearest to God who trusts Him most completely and is most childlike and true. God will do most by that man who is most reliant upon Him and most open with Him. David, who makes the Lord alone to be his confidence, is the man after God's own heart. And Abraham, who in faith could even give up his only son, is the friend of God. We shall never be full-grown with God until we become too little to dare to doubt, too insignificant to venture to question, and too true to suspect the Lord. Increase in faith is the one thing necessary to our advance in the divine life and work—and may the Holy Spirit work it in us for Christ's name's sake.

III. We have only a minute or two in which to mention THE SPECIAL SIGHT which was promised to Nathanael. He was to see an opened heaven. The gates of glory are not only opened now to believers, but they are carried right away and heaven is laid open to all its citizens, even to those who dwell below. This is a great joy to the believing heart, for free communion with heaven is the delight of our spirit. I cannot enlarge upon this, which is worthy of another sermon, but I may not say less than this—that in Christ the saints are brought very near to God, for even now they have come to the heavenly Jerusalem. The franchise of the new Jerusalem is extended to these low-lying regions in which we sojourn. The veil is rent and we have access to the holiest. The wall of separation is removed and now the abode of the church below is an adjunct of heaven, a suburban district of the metropolitan city of the New Jerusalem. The gates shall not be shut, nor a division created, nor communion suspended henceforth. Is not that a glorious thing that in the person of Christ Jesus heaven is laid open to earth and earth laid open to communications with heaven? Do you know that, beloved? It is a simple thing to talk of, but do you know it? Have you taken up your citizenship, so that you can say, "Truly our citizenship is in heaven"? While you are sitting under that fig tree, do you know what it is to sit in the heavenly places together with Christ? Are you risen and reigning with Him even now? If so, this is a joyful state of things and one which should cause you much assurance. We are now dwelling in the house of our God or at the very least we are sitting by the very gate of heaven. Our condition is known to the Lord and He is near to help us. We suffer not unseen and labor not unobserved. Nothing hinders God from helping us—nothing hinders us from securing His aid. Then the Lord went on to promise that he should see that the communion between heaven and earth, by the way of the Mediator, is not only possible, but actual. The ladder is set and there are angels ascending and descending upon it. God does hear and help and speak with believing men of pure heart.

Observe, that according to the text, the angels *ascend* first. It does say, "Descending and ascending," as we might naturally suppose, but they ascend first because when Jesus was on earth they were here already and ascended at His bidding to carry His upward messages. When Jesus Christ was here, He was never without His bodyguard of angels

and these were His messengers to the courts above. We today beloved, are surrounded by the forces of the Eternal—they have not to come to us for the first time—lo, they have these many years kept watch and guard around the fold of the redeemed, and when a new danger comes, they are prompt to do the part of watchers and of guardians and to carry tidings to the sentinels of heaven. Let us pray, for as we pray our prayers ascend to heaven and our praises, too. If we lead an angelical life, our thoughts will always be going up to heaven or returning thence. Beloved, have you realized this—that as you have believed in Christ upon the testimony of His Word, you have now the right of access to the eternal throne at all times? You have but to speak and God will hear you. Some of God's people do not know much about this. Praying is a religious exercise with them—a very proper exercise, but it is not speaking with God—it is not doing business with God and obtaining supplies at His hands. It is a ladder without angels or if you please, with ascending angels only, but none coming down with heavenly gifts. Beloved, I hope you have not fallen into this error. What? Is not prayer real with you? Do you expect nothing from it? Would you send an angel on a fool's errand? Do these ascend to heaven in mere sport and rush up and down to do nothing? Let us mean business when we pray or we shall be mockers of the divine majesty. Too many come before God and ask for everything in general but nothing in particular—and they get but scant answers to their pointless prayers. Many more are very slack in prayer and hence they starve their souls. Many angels must go up if many are to come down. Prayer must be constant and real with us. We should live as if we really had power with God, as if like Elijah we could go the top of Carmel and pray a brazen heaven away and deluge the earth with showers of blessings. Are you unable so to live like? Then the fault lies at your own door.

What was next? Nathanael was to see angels descending upon the Son of man, that is to say, he was to see heavenly spirits and blessings coming down to man by Jesus Christ. He who truly believes in Christ and is without guile shall have continual blessings from on high—all heaven shall be opened to him. God will help him by providence, will help him by grace, will help him by actual angels, and will help him spiritually by the all power which He has given unto Christ in heaven and in earth. How earnestly do I desire that this church this morning may see for itself what my eyes have seen for myself—for my faith sees heaven opened to supply the needs of Christ's work and all the might of God working to achieve His purposes. I am just entering upon another work for God. We have had enough of these enterprises, some say, why not wait? I am forced to go forward and onward. I must go, nor do I fear, for lo, I see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending, by the way of Christ Jesus, to bring us help. We may venture. There is no venture in it—we may trust God for anything. We may trust God for everything and just go straight on. It looks like walking the waters sometimes to trust Christ—especially about gold and silver—but we need not fear. The waters shall be a sea of glass beneath our feet if we can but simply trust. But oh, we must purge ourselves. We must be without guile. There must be no self-seeking. There must be a simple-hearted desire for God's glory and for nothing else. We must sink self and Christ must reign and

then we must trust and go forward. I hope we are right in this matter and if so, we shall see the salvation of God. Nothing can stop us. Behold, this day all things work together for good to them that love God. The stones of the field are in league with us. Yes, it is not on earth alone that we find allies, but the stars in their courses fight against our foes and all heaven is on the stir to befriend us in the service of God. See how the ladder swarms with coming and going angels! Heaven surrounds those who are doing heaven's work. God Himself is with us for our Captain and His host, which is very great, is round about us even as horses of fire and chariots of fire were round about the prophet. All things shall be given that are needed and as our day, our strength shall be. Brace yourselves, my brethren, for a new endeavor. Be strong in the Lord and you shall see greater things than these. Full of weakness, yet stand in His strength each one and play the man. Say, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me." Omnipotence is waiting to gird your loins. Buckle it about you and become mighty through God. Our Head, Christ Jesus, has all power in heaven and in earth and that power He pours into all His members. By faith I commit myself and I trust also my beloved church and friends to farther efforts for our Lord, relying upon His Word, "You shall see greater things than these," and fully believing that through Christ Jesus all the forces of heaven are in alliance with us and the will of the Lord shall surely be accomplished.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
JOHN 1:35-51; GENESIS 28:10-22.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—412, 335, 317.

[Mr. Spurgeon alludes to the Girls' Orphanage. The fund has just commenced and land has been purchased. A large amount will be needed, but there is a great God to look to.]

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NO. 1479

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DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 15, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

(On behalf of the Mansion House Fund for the Hospitals of London).

"He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up your bed and walk." John 5:11.

JUST a few observations upon the narrative itself. It was a feast day and Jesus Christ came up to Jerusalem to find opportunities for doing good among the crowds of His countrymen. I see all the city glad. I hear the voice of rejoicing in every house as they hold high festival and eat the fat and drink the sweet. But where does Jesus keep the feast? How does He spend His holiday? He walks among the poor, whom He loves so well. Behold Him in the hospital. There was one notable Bethesda or house of mercy in Jerusalem—it was a poor provision for the city's abounding sickness, but such as it was, it was greatly prized. There was a pool which every now and then was stirred by an angel's wing and worked an occasional cure. Around it charitable persons had built five porches and there on the cold stone steps a number of blind and crippled and withered folk were lying, each one upon his own wretched pallet, waiting for the moving of the waters. There were the weary children of pain, fainting, while others were feasting. They were racked with pain amid general rejoicing. They were sighing amid universal singing. Our Lord was at home amid this mercy, for here was room for His tender heart and powerful hands. He feasted His soul by doing good. Let us learn this lesson, dear friends, that in the times of our brightest joys we should remember the sorrowful and find a still higher joy in doing them good. It well becomes us in proportion as a day is gladsome to ourselves to make it so to the sick and poor around us. Let us keep the feast by sending portions to those for whom nothing is prepared, for else the famishing may bring a curse upon our feasting. When we are prospered in business, let us set aside a portion for the poor; when we are full of health and strength, let us recollect those to whom these privileges are denied and aid those who minister to them. Blessed shall they be who, like the Lord Jesus, visit the sick and care for them.

Coming into the hospital, our Lord noticed a certain man whose case was a very sad one. There were many painful cases there, but He singled out this man and it would seem that the reason for His choice was that the poor creature was in the worst plight of all. If misery has a claim on pity, then the greater the sufferer the more is mercy attracted towards him. This poor victim of rheumatism or paralysis had been thirty-eight years bound by his infirmity. Let us hope there was no worse case on all

Bethesda's porches! Thirty-eight years is more than half the appointed period of human life. One year of pain or paralysis has a weary length of torture about it, but think of thirty-eight! We may well pity the man who endures the pangs of rheumatism even for an hour, but how shall we sufficiently pity him who has not been free from it for hard on forty years? Even if the case were not one of pain but of paralysis, the inability to work and the consequent poverty of so many years were by no means a small evil. Our Lord, then, selects the worst case to be dealt with by His curing hand as a type of what He often does in the kingdom of grace—and as a lesson of prudence to us—instructing us to give our first aid to those who are first in point of need.

The man whom Jesus healed was by no means an attractive character. Our Savior said to him, when he was healed, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you," from which it is not an improbable inference that his first infirmity had come upon him by deed of vice or course of excess. In some way or other, he had been guilty of that which brought upon his body the suffering which he was enduring. Now, it is considered generally to be a point beyond all dispute that we should help the worthy but should refuse the worthless—that when a man brings a calamity upon himself by wrong doing—we are justified in letting him suffer that he may reap what he has sown. This cold Pharisaic idea is very congenial to minds which are bent upon saving their coin. It springs up in many hearts, or rather in places where hearts ought to be, and it is generally regarded as if it were a rule of prudence which it would be sinful to dispute—an axiom infallible and universal. Now, I venture to say that our Savior never taught us to confine our alms to the deserving. He would never have bestowed the grand alms of grace on any one of us if He had carried out that rule and if you and I had received no more at the hands of God than we deserved, we should not have been in this house of prayer. We cannot afford to cramp our charity into a sort of petty justice and sour our almsgiving into a miniature law court. When a man is suffering let us pity him, however the suffering has come; when a man had been in misery so long as thirty-eight years, it was time that his infirmity should be more considered than his iniquity, and that his present sorrow should be thought upon more than his former folly. So Jesus thought and therefore He came to the sinner, not with reproach, but with restoration. He saw his disease rather than his depravity and gave him pity instead of punishment. Our God is kind to the unthankful and to the evil—be you, therefore, merciful as your Father also is merciful. Remember how our Lord said, "Pray for them that despitefully use you, that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." Let us imitate Him in this and wherever there is pain and sorrow, let it be our joy to relieve it.

In addition to the supposition that this man had at some time been grossly guilty, it seems pretty clear from the text that he was a poor, shiftless, discouraged, inanimate, stupid sort of person. He had never managed to get into the pool, though others had done so who were as infirm as himself. He had never been able to win a friend or secure a helper, though from the extreme length of his infirmity one would have

thought that at some period or another he might have found a man to place him in the pool when the angel gave it the mystic stir. The Savior's asking him, "Do you want to be made whole?" leads us to think that he had fallen into such a listless, despairing, heart-sick condition that though he came daily to the edge of the pool as a matter of habit, he had not only ceased to hope, but had almost ceased to wish. Our Lord touched the chord which was most likely to respond, namely, his will and desire to be made whole—but the response was a very feeble one. His answer shows what a poor creature he was, for there is not a beam of hope in it or even of desire—it is a wail, a hopeless dirge, a grievous complaint—"I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool, but while I am coming, another steps down before me." But the utter imbecility and lack of brains of the poor creature is most seen in the fact that like a simpleton he went to Christ's enemies and told them that it was Jesus that had made him whole. I am sure there was no malice in his thus informing our Lord's enemies, for if there had been, he would have said, "It was Jesus who bade me take up my bed," whereas he worded it thus, "It was Jesus which had made him whole." I hardly dare, however, to hope, as some do, that there was much gratitude about this testimony, though doubtless the poor soul was grateful. I conceive that his long endurance of pain, acting upon a weak mind, had brought him to an almost imbecile state of mind, so that he spoke without thought. Our Lord did not, therefore, require much of him. He did not ask even for a distinct acknowledgement of faith from him, but only for that small measure of it which might be implied in his answering the question, "Do you want to be made whole?" This poor man evinced none of the shrewdness of the man born blind who answered the Pharisees so keenly—he was of quite another type and could do no more than state his own case to Jesus. Thank God, even that was enough for our Lord to work with. The Lord Jesus saves people of all sorts. He has among His disciples men of quick and ready wit who can baffle their opponents, but quite as often—

"He takes the fool and makes him know
The wonders of His dying love:
To bring aspiring wisdom low,
And all its pride reprove."

So here He chose this poor simpleton of a creature and worked a great marvel upon him, to the exceeding praise of His condescending grace.

Note well that this man's mind, though there was not much of it, was all engrossed and filled up with the fact that he had been made whole. Jesus to him was, "He that made me whole." Of the person of Jesus, he knew next to nothing, for he had only seen Him for an instant and then he didn't know that it was Jesus. His one idea of Jesus was, "He that made me whole." Now, beloved brethren, this was natural in his case and it will be equally natural in our own. Even when the saved ones are more intelligent and of larger mind than this poor paralytic, they must still chiefly think of the Son of God as their Savior—as He that made them whole. If I do not know much about the Lord, yet I do know that He has saved me. I was burdened with guilt and full of woes and could not rest day nor night until He gave me peace. If I cannot tell anything much con-

cerning the glory of His person, His attributes, His relationships, His offices or His work, yet I can say, "One thing I know, whereas I was blinded by error, now I see. Whereas I was paralyzed by sin, I am now able to stand upright and walk in His ways." This poor soul knew the Lord experientially and that is the best way of knowing Him. Actual contact with Him yields a surer knowledge and a truer knowledge than all the reading in the world. In the kingdom of Christ wonderful facts transpire, such as conversion and finding peace with God—and happy are they to whom these facts are personal experiences. When men are turned from the error of their ways and when their heart finds rest and peace in Christ, great deeds are done by the Lord Jesus and if you are acquainted with these two things, even though you should be ignorant of a great deal else, be not afraid of exaggerating their importance, but set your mind on them and call Jesus by that name, "He that made me whole." Think of Him under that aspect and you will have a very valuable and influential idea of Him. You shall see greater things than these, but for the present let these happy and sure facts be much upon your mind, even as his being made whole was upon this man's mind.

As for the quibbling Pharisees, you observe that they took no notice of the glorious fact of the man's cure—they willfully ignored what Christ had done, but they fell full swoop upon that little insignificant circumstance that it had been done on the Sabbath-day and then they spent all their thoughts and emotions upon that side issue. They say nothing of the man's being restored, but they rage because he carried his bed on the Sabbath-day. It is much the same with the men of the world at this day. They habitually ignore the fact of conversion. If they do not deny it, they look upon it as being a trifle—a matter not worth caring about. Though they see the harlot made chaste and the thief made honest and the profane made devout and the despairing made joyful and other moral and spiritual changes of the utmost practical value, they forget all this and they attack some peculiar point of doctrine or mode of speech or diversity of manner and raise a storm concerning these. Is it because the facts themselves, if fairly looked at, would establish what they do not care to believe? The fact that Christianity is doing marvels in the world, such as nothing else ever did, they persistently forget, but that fact is just what you and I must as persistently remember. We must dwell upon what Christ has by His Holy Spirit worked within our nature by renewing us in the spirit of our minds, and we must make this work of grace a fountain of argument which shall establish our faith and justify our conduct. This poor man did so. He did not know much else, but that he had been made whole he did know and from that fact he justified himself in what he had done. "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up your bed and walk."

This is the truth which I want to enlarge upon this morning—first, by saying that the work of Christ furnishes us with *a justification for our obedience to His command,* "He that made me whole, the same said unto me"—that is our complete justification for what we do. In the second place, the work of Jesus Christ throws upon us *an obligation to do what He bids us*—if He that made me whole says to me, "Take up your bed and walk," I am bound to do it and I ought to feel the obligation of His good-

ness pressing upon me. And in the third place, it is not only a justification and an obligation, but the deed of grace becomes a *constraint to obedience*—He that said unto me, "Rise," and so made me whole, by that same word of power made me take up my bed and walk. The power which saves us also moves us to obey our Savior. Not with our own might do we fulfill the will of our Lord, but with power which the Healer gives us in the same hour. You see the drift, therefore, of our discourse. May the Holy Spirit lead us into the power of this truth, for I am persuaded that a sense of the Lord's work within us is a great force and should be excited and applied to the highest ends.

I. First, then, this is our JUSTIFICATION for what we do when we obey Christ. This poor man could not defend the action of taking up his bed and walking for his enemies were learned in the law and he was not. You and I could defend it very easily, for it seems to us a very proper thing to do under the circumstances. The weight of his bed was not much more than that of an ordinary great coat. It was a simple rug or mat upon which he was lying—there really was no violation of God's law of the Sabbath and therefore there was nothing to excuse. But the Rabbis laid down rules of which I will give you but one specimen—"It is unlawful to carry a handkerchief loose in the pocket"—but if you pin it to your pocket or tie it round your waist as a belt, you may carry it anywhere because it becomes a part of your dress. To my unsophisticated mind, it would have seemed that the pin increased the ponderous burden and so there was the weight of the pin more than was necessary! This was quite a weighty business according to Rabbinical estimates. The most of the Rabbinical regulations with regard to the Sabbath were absolutely ludicrous, but this poor man was not in a position to say so or even to think so, for like the rest of his countrymen, he stood in awe of the scribes and doctors. These learned Pharisees and priests were too much reverenced for this poor creature to answer them in their own manner, but he did what you and I must always do when we are at all puzzled—he hid behind the Lord Jesus and pleaded, "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up your bed." That was quite enough for him and he quoted it as if he felt that it ought to be enough for those who questioned him. Truly it ought to have been so. I may not be able to find in my own knowledge and ability an authority equal to the authority of learned unbelievers, but my personal experience of the power of grace will stand me in as good a stead as this man's cure was to him. He argued that there must be in the man who made him whole enough authority to match the greatest possible rabbi that ever lived. Even his poor feeble mind could grasp that and surely you and I may do the same—we can defend ourselves behind the breastwork of our Savior's gracious work—and the consequent authority which belongs to Him.

There are certain *ordinances* to which a Christian man is bound to attend, about which the world raises a storm of questions. The world does not take notice that this man was once a drunkard and has through divine grace become sober and so has become a good father and a good husband and a good citizen. It lets that miracle pass by unheeded—but if he is going to be *baptized*, they at once object to the ordinance. Or if he is going to join a Christian church, they straightway jeer at him as a

Presbyterian or a Methodist—as if it matters what sort of name they give him—so long as he is a better man than themselves and is redeemed from sin and taught to be upright and chaste and pure in the sight of God. The work of grace counts for nothing with them, but just the peculiarity of sect, or the peculiarity of religious rite is made a world of. Blind creatures despise the medicine which heals because of the bottle which contains it or the label by which it is named. However, our answer is, "He that made us whole," the same gave us a command and by that command we will abide. We seek no justification but this—that He who worked a miracle of grace upon us bade us do it. What if I am about to be baptized as a believer? The same that said, "Believe," said, "Be baptized." He who gave me salvation, the same said, "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved." Over against all objections, we set the divine authority of Jesus. He by whose blood we are cleansed and by whose Spirit we are renewed is Lord and lawgiver to us. His precept is our sufficient warrant. If we go to the communion table and revilers say, "What is the use of eating a piece of bread and drinking a drop of wine? Why think so solemnly of so small a matter?" We reply, He that made us whole, the same said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." We renounce what He has not ordained, but we cling to His statutes. If He had commanded a rite still more trivial or a ceremony still more open to objection in the eyes of carnal man, we would make no further apology than this—He who has created us anew and given us a hope of heaven and led us to seek after perfect holiness—He has bidden us do it. This is our final reply and although we could find other justifications, they would be superfluous. This stands for our defense—the Savior commands it.

The same apology applies to all *the doctrines of the gospel*. I say again, ungodly men will not admit or if they admit it they ignore it, that the gospel works a marvelous change in men's hearts. If they want proof, we can find them instances by hundreds and by thousands of the reclaiming, elevating, and purifying power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is daily working spiritual miracles, but this they forget—and they go on to find fault with its peculiar doctrines. Justification by faith they frequently quarrel with. "Well now," they say, "that is a shocking doctrine. If you teach men that they are to be saved by faith alone and not by their works, of course they will lead loose lives. If you continually declare that salvation is of grace alone and not of merit, the inevitable result will be that men will sin that grace may abound. We find a complete answer to this slander in the fact that believers in justification by faith and in the doctrines of grace are among the best and purest of men—and in fact these truths work holiness. But we do not care to argue thus. We prefer to remind our adversaries that He who has caused us to be regenerate men, Himself taught us that whosoever believes in Him shall be saved and expressly declared that he that believes in Him has everlasting life. By the mouth of His servant Paul, He has said that by grace are men saved through faith and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God. He has also told us that by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified and He has bidden us declare that "The just shall live by faith." He who is daily by His gospel turning men from sin to holiness has given this for the sum total of the gospel we are to preach, "Look unto Me and be you

saved, all the ends of the earth." If this gospel does not make men better and change their evil natures, you may question it if you like and we do not wonder that you should—but while it continues its purifying work, we shall not blush or stammer when we declare the doctrines which are its essence and life. Our regeneration proves to us our Lord's authority and upon that we are prepared to base our creed. To us the best of evidence is His work within us and in that evidence we place implicit faith.

The same applies to all *the precepts* which the Christian is called upon to obey. For instance, if he is true to his colors, he keeps himself aloof from all the sinful pleasures, practices, and policies of the world in which others take delight and consequently the ungodly world says that he is peculiar, precise, and self-opinionated. This is the answer for all Christians, "He that made us whole, the same said to us, 'You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Come you out from among them and be you separate, touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you.'" If you follow the precepts of the Lord Jesus Christ, you may meet all charges of peculiarity by urging the supremacy of the Savior whose power has made you a new creature. Where His Word is, there is a power to which we bow at once. It is not ours to question our Savior, but to obey Him. We are cleansed by His blood. We are redeemed by His death. We live by His life and therefore are not ashamed to take up His cross and follow Him.

This apology ought to suffice even those who oppose us, for if they felt as grateful as we do, they would obey also. They ought at any rate to say, "We cannot blame these men for doing as Jesus bids them because He has done so much for them." Surely the poor man who had been thirty-eight years paralyzed could not be blamed for obeying the command of one who, in a moment, restored him to health and strength. If he became His servant for life, who would censure him? Who would say that he too tamely submitted? Should not such a benefactor exert a boundless influence over him? What could be more natural and proper? Now, you unconverted people must excuse us, if we, in obedience to our Lord Jesus, do many things which to you seem very peculiar, for though we would not needlessly offend, we cannot please you at the risk of displeasing our Lord. We do not owe so much to you as we owe to Him. We do not owe so much to the whole world as we owe to the Lord Jesus. In fact, truth to tell, we do not feel that we owe anything to the world. The time past suffices us to have worked the will of the Gentiles, for when we are asked the question, "What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed?" We have to confess that we had no fruit, except the sour grapes which set our teeth on edge. Like the shipmen who put out to sea against Paul's advice, our only gain has been loss and damage. In serving the world, we found the labor wearisome and the wages death, but as for our Lord Jesus, we owe Him everything and so you must excuse us if we try to follow Him in everything. It seems to us that this is an excuse which you ought to accept from us as covering the whole ground—but if you refuse it, we are not at all dismayed, for it quite suffices us, yes, more than suffices us—it makes us glory in what we do. Does Jesus command? Then it is ours to obey. Objectors may say, concerning one of His ordinances, it is unsuitable to the climate, it is indecent, it is need-

less, it is I do not know what—all this is no concern of ours—if Jesus bade us do it, His command stands for us in the place of reasoning. He who made us whole gives us sufficient excuse for obedience in that very fact. "Oh, but it is contrary to what the fathers teach and to what the church teaches." We care not the snap of our finger for all the fathers and all the churches under heaven if they go contrary to what our Lord teaches—for they did not make us whole and we are not under obligation to them as we are to Him. The authority of Jesus is supreme because it is from His lips that we received the word which healed the sickness of our sin. This satisfies our conscience now and it will do so amid the solemnities of death. How can we make a mistake if we follow the words of Jesus in all things? My brethren, we can plead His precepts as our warrant at the last great day before the Judge of the quick and the dead. What better plea can we have than this, "You did make us whole and You did bid us do this"? Such a justification of our conduct will make our death pillow soft and our resurrection bright with joy.

Instead of admitting that this is not an ample justification, let us go further still in the strength of it. If the world has accounted us vile for obeying our Lord, let us be still viler and inasmuch as He that made us whole said, "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," let us endeavor to spread abroad everywhere the savor of His name, consecrating ourselves body, soul, and spirit to the extension of His Kingdom. He who made us whole will make the world whole yet by His own wondrous power. Have we not abundantly shown that our Lord's command is a solid justification of our conduct?

II. And now, secondly, the cure brought forth AN OBLIGATION. "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up your bed and walk." The argument takes this form—first, if He made me whole, He is divine or He could not do this miracle. Or to say the least, He must be divinely authorized—and if He is divine or divinely authorized, I must be bound to obey the orders which He issues. Is not that a plain argument which even the poor, simple mind of the paralytic man was able to grasp and wield? Let us try and feel the force of that argument ourselves. Jesus who has saved us is our God—shall we not obey Him? Since He is clothed with divine power and majesty, shall we not scrupulously endeavor to know His will and zealously endeavor to carry it out in every point as His Spirit shall enable us?

In addition to the divine character which the miracle proved and displayed, there was the goodness which shone in the deed of power and touched the poor man's heart. His argument was, "I must do what my great Deliverer bids me. How can you think otherwise? Did He not make me whole? Would you have me, whom He has thus graciously restored, refuse to fulfill His desire? Must I not take up my bed the moment He gives me strength to do it? How can I do otherwise? Is this to be the recompense I pay to my good Physician—at once to refuse to do what He asks of me? Do you not see that I am under an obligation which it would be shameful to deny? He restored these limbs and I am bound to do with them what He orders me do with them. He says, 'Walk,' and since these once withered feet have been restored, shall I not walk? He bids me roll up my bed and since I could not have used my hands till just now His

word gave them life—shall I not use them to roll up the bed-rug at His bidding? These poor shoulders of mine were bent with weakness, but He has made me stand upright. And since He now bids me carry my bed, shall I not throw the mattress on my shoulders and bear the easy load which He lays upon me?" There was no answering such reasoning. Whatever might have been the claim of Jesus upon others, He clearly had an indisputable right to the loyal obedience of one whom He had made perfectly whole.

Follow me briefly in this, brothers and sisters. If you have been saved by the grace of God, your salvation has put you under obligation henceforth to do what Jesus bids you. Are you redeemed? Then you are not your own—you are bought with a price. Have you been, in consequence of what the Lord has done for you, rescued from Satanic slavery and adopted into the divine family? Then it clearly follows that because you are sons and daughters, you should be obedient to the law of the household—for is not this a first element of sonship—that you should reverence the great Father of the family? The Lord has been pleased to put away your sin. You are forgiven—but does not pardon demand amendment? Shall we go back to the old sins from which we have been cleansed? Shall we live in the iniquities from which we have been washed by the blood of our Lord Jesus? That was horrible to think of. It would be nothing less than devilish for a man to say, "I have been forgiven and therefore I will sin again." There is no remission where there is no repentance. The guilt of sin remains on that man in whom the love of sin still remains. Let us practically feel the force of this and follow after purity and righteousness henceforth.

Brethren and sisters upon whom Christ has worked His great work, you have experienced the love of God and therefore, if God has so loved you, you are bound to love Him in return. If God has so loved you, you must also love your brother. Do not love to God and love of man spring up as a sure consequence of the love of God shed abroad in the heart? Does not everyone see the necessity which calls for the one love to follow the other? But love is the mother of obedience—thus everything connected with our Lord lays us under obligation to obey Him. There is not a single blessing of the covenant but what necessarily entails its corresponding duty—and here I scarcely like to say duty—for these blessings of the covenant make duty to be our privilege and holiness to be our delight. Henceforth, redeemed from sin, we would live no longer therein. Henceforth, made heirs of heaven, we endeavor to lead the heavenly life so that even while we are below, our conversation may be in heaven from where we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Brethren, He that made you whole has commanded this and that to be done by you. I counsel you to keep the King's commandment. As Mary said to the waiters at the wedding at Cana, so I say to you, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." Does He bid you pray, then pray without ceasing. Does He bid you watch as well as pray? Then guard every act and thought and word. Does He bid you love your brethren? Then love them with a pure heart fervently. Does He bid you serve them and humble yourself for His sake? Then do so and become the servant of all. Has He said, "Be you holy, for I am holy"? Then aim at this by His Holy Spirit. Has He said, "Be you perfect,

even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"? Then strive after perfection, for He that made you whole has a right to direct your way and it will be both your safety and your happiness to submit yourselves to His commands.

III. Enough, however, upon that. We now call your attention, in the third place, to the text under the sense of CONSTRAINT. "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up your bed and walk." He made him whole by saying, "Rise, take up your bed." The carrying of the bed was part and parcel of the cure. The first part of the healing word was "Rise," but the second was, "take up your bed." Now, it was not an ordinary word which Jesus spoke to that man—a mere word of advice, warning, or command—it was a word full of power like that which created light out of darkness. When the Lord said to the poor man, "Rise," he did rise. A thrill went through him—those stagnant blood vessels felt the life-blood stir and flow—those dormant nerves were aroused to sensations of health. Those withered sinews and muscles braced themselves for energetic action, for omnipotence had visited the impotent man and restored him. Oh it must have been a wondrous joy to the long enervated, nerveless, powerless frame to be capable of healthy motion—to be equal to bearing a happy burden. The joyful man rolled up his bed, threw it on his back and marched abroad with the best of them. The bed-carrying was part of the cure and proof of the cure. The paralytic had not been called upon to deliberate as to whether he should rise or not, but Jesus said, "Rise," and he stood upright. The same word said, "Take up your bed." The bed was up at once and according to the last word, "walk," the man walked with delight. It was all done by the power of the one thrilling sentence which tarried not to be questioned, but accomplished the end for which the Lord had sent it. Not unwillingly did the restored man carry his bed, yet he did it of constraint, for the same power which made him whole made him obedient. Before the divine energy had touched him, he seemed scarcely to have any will at all and the Lord had to hunt to find a will in him, saying, "Do you want to be made whole?" But now he cheerfully wills obedience to his benefactor and in the force of the command, he carried out the Lord's behest. I say that his taking up his bed and walking was done by Christ's enabling and done by Christ's constraining—and I pray that you may know by experience what this means. What I want you to feel is this, "I cannot help obeying Christ, for by His Holy Spirit He has spoken me into a life which will never die and never be vanquished. He has spoken a word in me which has a continuous force over me and thrills me through and through constantly. I can no more help seeking to obey Christ than this man could help carrying his bed when the Lord, by a word of power, had bidden him do so."

Brethren, look at this and be instructed and warned. Do you feel reluctant this morning to enter upon your Lord's service because of conscious weakness? Has the devil tempted you to draw back from obedience because of your unfitness? Do you hesitate? Do you tremble? Surely you need to draw near to the Lord again and hear His voice anew. Take your Bibles and let Him speak to you again out of the Word and may the same thrill which awoke you out of your death-sleep wake you out of your present lethargy. There is need that the living Word of God should

come home to your inmost soul again with that same miraculous power which dwelt in it at first. "Lord, quicken me," is David's prayer, but it suits me every day and I think most of God's people would do well to use it daily. "Lord, speak life unto me now as You did at first. Speak power, speak spiritual force into me." "The love of Christ constrains us," says the apostle. This constraint is what we want to feel more and more. We need divine life perpetually to bear us forward to acts of obedience. We do not want to destroy willinghood, but we would have it quickened into entire subservience to the will of the Lord. Like Noah's ark on dry land, the will keeps its place by its own dead weight—O for a flood of grace to move, to lift, to bear it up—to carry it away by a mighty current. We would be borne before the love of Christ as a tiny piece of wood is drifted by the gulf- stream or as one of the specks which dance in the sunbeam would be carried by a rushing wind. As the impulse which began with Jesus found the poor man passive because utterly unable to be otherwise and then impelled him on to active movements as with a rush of power, so may it ever be with us throughout life. May we forever yield to the divine impulse. To be passive in the Lord's hands is a good desire, but to be what I would call actively passive, to be cheerfully submissive, willing to give up our will—this is a higher spiritual mood. We must live and yet not we, but Christ in us. We must act and yet we must say, He that made me whole bade me do this holy deed and I do it because His power moves me to do thereunto. If I have done well, I lay the honor at His feet. If I hope to do well in the future, it is because I hope for strength from Him to do well, believing that He will work in me by that same power which converted me at the first. Beloved, endeavor to abide under this influence; and may the Holy Spirit bring you there!

My last word is a practical lesson. The church of God on earth at this present time anxiously desires to spread her influence over the world. For Christ's sake we wish to have the truths we preach acknowledged and the precepts which we deliver obeyed. But mark, no church will ever have power over the masses of this or any other land except in proportion as she does them good. The day has long since passed in which any church may hope to prevail on the plea of history. "Look at what we were," is a vain appeal—men only care for what we are. The sect which glorifies itself with the faded laurels of past centuries and is content to be inactive today is very near to its inglorious end. In the race of usefulness, men nowadays care less about the pedigree of the horse and more about the rate at which it can run. The history of a congregation or a sect is of small account compared with the practical good which it is doing. Now, if any church under heaven can show that it is making men honest, temperate, pure, moral, holy—that it is seeking out the ignorant and instructing them, that it is seeking out the fallen and reclaiming them, that in fact it is turning moral wastes into gardens and taking the weeds and briars of the wilderness and transforming them into precious fruit-bearing trees—then the world will be ready to hear its claims and consider them. If a church cannot prove its usefulness, the source of its moral strength will have gone and indeed something worse than this will have happened, for its spiritual strength will have gone, too, for a barren church is manifestly without the fruitful Spirit of God. Brethren, you

may, if you will, dignify your minister by the name of bishop. You may give to your deacons and elders grand official titles. You may call your place of worship a cathedral. You may worship if you will with all the grandeur of pompous ceremonies and the adornments of music and incense and the like—but you shall have only the semblance of power over human minds unless you have something more than these. But if you have a church, no matter by what name it is called, that is devout, that is holy, that is living unto God, that does good in its neighborhood, that by the lives of its members spreads holiness and righteousness—in a word, if you have a church that is really making the world whole in the name of Jesus—you shall in the long run find that even the most carnal and thoughtless will say, "The church which is doing this good is worthy of respect. Therefore, let us hear what it has to say." Living usefulness will not screen us from persecution, but it will save us from contempt. A holy church goes with authority to the world in the name of Jesus Christ, its Lord, and this force the Holy Spirit uses to bring human hearts into subjection to the truth. Oh, that the church of God would believe in Jesus' power to heal sick souls. Recollect this man, thirty-eight years sick, had been longer ill than Christ had lived on earth. He had been seven years afflicted before Christ was born. And even so this poor world has been long afflicted. Years before the Pentecost or the birth of the present visible church, the poor sinful world lay at the pool and could not stir. We must not be hopeless about it, for yet the Lord will cast sin out of it. Let us go in Jesus Christ's name and proclaim the everlasting gospel and say, "Rise, take up your bed and walk," and it shall be done and God shall be glorified and we shall be blessed.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 5:1-23.
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CONSTANT, INSTANT, EXPECTANT
NO. 1480

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 22, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Continuing instant in prayer."
Romans 12:12.

THIS is placed in connection with a large number of brief, but very weighty precepts. Prayer has a distinct relationship to all Christian duties and graces. It is not possible for us to carry out the holy commands of our Lord Jesus unless we are abundant in supplication. The Romans at the time that Paul wrote to them were subject to persecution and in this verse he mentions two remedies for impatience under such afflictions—remedies which are equally effective under all the trials of life. The old physicians tell us of two antidotes against poison, the hot and the cold—and they dilate upon the special excellence of each of these. In like manner, the apostle Paul gives us first the warm antidote, "Rejoicing in hope," and then he gives us the cool antidote, "Patient in tribulation." Either of these or both together will work wonderfully for the sustaining of the spirit in the hour of affliction, but it is to be observed that neither of these remedies can be taken into the soul unless they are mixed with a draught of prayer. Joy and patience are curative essences, but they must be dropped into a glass full of supplication and then they will be wonderfully efficient. How can we "rejoice in hope" if we know nothing about prayer to the God of Hope? Whenever your hope seems to fail you and your joy begins to sink—the shortest remedy is to take to your knees. By remembering the promise in prayer, hope will be sustained and then joy is sure to spring from it, for joy is the first-born child of hope. As for "patience," how can we be patient if we cannot pray? Have not holy men of old always sustained themselves in their worst times of grief and depression by betaking themselves to prayer? Mind that you do the same. Impatience will be sure to follow prayerlessness, but the endurance of the divine will grows out of communion with God in prayer. I like that beautiful though sad picture of the Norwich martyr, Hudson, of whom Foxe tells us that when he stood at the stake with the chain about him to be burnt, he fell under a cloud. The Lord had withdrawn the light of His countenance from him and therefore this man of God slipped from under the chain to have a few minutes alone with God. Some thought that he was about to recant and his fellow martyrs began exhorting him to be steadfast and to play the man, but this dear believer knew what he was at and when he had spoken with his God, he came back to the stake with a bright and beaming countenance, saying, "Now, I thank God. I am strong and fear not what man can do unto me," and stood in his place with his fellow sufferers and there burned quick to the death without

fear. Oh the power of prayer! If we do but know how to get into contact with the Eternal and Omnipotent, we shall be joyful and patient in all tribulations and bravely endure even the keen edge of death.

Prayer is to be exercised in all things, for from its position in the present context we are taught that it is not without prayer that we proceed to "distribute to the necessities of the saints." Because we have prayed for them, we are ready to befriend them by deeds of love. If we have not been accustomed to pray for the brethren, we shall not be "given to hospitality," much less shall we "bless them which persecute us." Prayer is the lifeblood of duty, the secret sap of holiness, the fountain of obedience. Upon prayer as spoken of in the text may the Holy Spirit help us now to meditate.

Three things I shall speak upon which will be remembered the better by being linked with three words—*Instant, constant, expectant*.

I. First, then, INSTANT, "*Continuing instant in prayer*." It may be proper at this stage to say that these words, though I shall dwell upon them in the English, are not identical with the Greek in which there is but one word. I do not know that a better translation could possibly be given and so I shall content myself with the very words of our own version. The word "instant," as used by our translators, meant pressing, urgent, importunate, and earnest. The Greek word is said to have the signification of "always applying strength in prayer" or continuing with all your might in prayer. Our prayer is to be full of strength, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in You." Master Brooks says that the word is a metaphor taken from hunting dogs which will never give up the game till they have got it. A hunting dog, when in pursuit of its victim, works itself into full motion, using every limb and muscle to follow as fast as possible. If you catch a glimpse of it, you will see that it throws itself forward with intense eagerness—the whole body and soul of the dog is in motion towards one object—no portion of him lingers. Not so much as a glance is given to anything else. The whole creature is instant after the game which it pursues, urgently pressing—hot foot—as we say, to overtake the prey. Now, this is the way in which we are to pray. Prayer as a mere form is but a mockery. Prayer in a languid, half-hearted manner may be more dishonoring to God than honoring to Him—we ourselves may be rather injured by lukewarm prayer than benefited by it. Prevalent prayer is frequently spoken of in Scripture as an agony, "striving together with me in your prayers." We frequently speak of it as wrestling and we do well, for so it is. In wrestling, a man has all his mind as well as all his body occupied with the desire to overthrow his antagonist. Now he bends and twists and then he strains and stretches—now he uses one foot and then another. He tries his arm and now his leg. He shifts his ground. He takes up another position and he keeps his eye perpetually open lest he should be caught unawares. He has both his hands eager for a grip, his whole body ready for a throw—the whole man is in his wrestling. After such a manner, pray you. The whole of your mind, your memory, your judgment, your affection, your hopes, your fears and even your imagination must be concentrated upon this labor of prayer. May the Holy Spirit work

in you this comprehensive ardor, this energy of the whole man! We must go with our whole soul to God or He will not accept us. It will be ill for us if we are half-hearted, for it is written, "Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty." "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force." We are exhorted to "knock" and as our model, we are directed to him who at midnight awakened his slumbering friend. We are exhorted to be persistent like the widow with the unjust judge. We are to pray as if all depended upon our praying, though after all that praying is in itself an effect of a cause which has existed long before. We are to be as persistent as if God were unwilling and to plead as earnestly as if He did not already know far better than we do what things we have need of. Earnestness must be present in all our prayers or they will return to us unanswered—this is reasonable enough. Shall God be expected to give to us that which we do not value? If we do not value the blessing sufficiently to be eager in seeking it, is it not right that He should withhold it until we are in a better mind? Are we to worship God with a divided reverence? Are we to treat Him as though it were quite enough for Him if we gave Him a stray thought or a half-hearted desire now and then as a sort of compliment? Can we expect that He will receive our sacrifice if we lay no fire under it? If we have no impetuous earnestness of spirit, can we expect that we shall be accepted? He loathes the lukewarm. Will He not loathe our prayers? See how we deal with our fellow men—if they ask a favor of us and we see that they care but little about it, we are in no great haste to put ourselves about to do them the turn. But if they are very pressing, we yield to their entreaties—and so does God in His mercy yield to the entreaties of His people. As one has very prettily said, the nurse when she has her child in the cradle, though it begins to cry and whinny a little, she leaves it and continues at her household work and when it cries a little more and a little more, she still listens, but she lets it be where it is. But when at last the baby takes to vehement crying, then straightway she presses it to her bosom with many a kiss and kindly word. Children of God, you must cry mightily unto the Lord and pour out your hearts like water before Him and then will He have regard unto the voice of your cry—and it shall be unto you even according to your desire. Instancy in prayer is necessary. We must be fervent or burning or we shall not prevail.

How are we to attain to this urgency? God's gracious Spirit must give it to us, but what are the methods by which under His direction we may become instant in prayer?

I answer first, *let us study very thoroughly the value of the mercy which we are seeking at God's hand.* Seeker, take heed to do this.

Whatever it is that you are asking for, it is no trifle. Look at it. If it is a thing about which you are not certain that it would be according to God's mind, lay it aside—you have no right to be very fervent about that which is of questionable necessity. If this may or may not be good for you, put up your requests to the great Father gently once or twice, and then lay them lightly in Jesus' hands; and when you are certain that the blessing sought for is a good and necessary thing for your soul, then in order that

your spirit may be strong in prayer, get a deep sense of its value, its goodness, and its necessity. Examine it as a goldsmith inspects a jewel when he wishes to estimate its worth. A man's ardor in pursuit will be in proportion to his consciousness of the value of that which he pursues. Pray that you may feel what a precious thing grace is, what it cost the Lord to bring it to you, what blessings it brings with it for time and for eternity. And when your heart sees that it seeks after an unspeakably precious gift, then will its desire be stirred up to pray with intense longings.

When you have done this, meditate much upon your necessities that you may *get a sense of your need of the mercy you are seeking*. Look at your soul's poverty and your own undeservingness. Look at what will happen to you unless this blessing comes. If it is some absolutely indispensable spiritual blessing, picture to yourself where you will be if God should withhold it—what evils will spring of your continuing in want of it and what further needs may yet beset you. The more your need smites you, the more eagerly will you cry unto the Lord concerning it. Are you desirous of bread for your soul? Be hungry and let your hunger eat into your heart. Are you desirous of the water of life? Be thirsty and let your thirst burn you till you are dried up like a potsherd. Let your necessities have liberty, by meditation, to seize you and to distress you with a sense of your emptiness and nothingness. Nothing sets a man more eagerly upon prayer than a deep sense of his need of that which he is seeking at the Lord's hand. He will eagerly seek for garments who shivers in his nakedness amid the winter's blast. He will earnestly long for home who feels himself lost upon a moor in the midst of a midnight fog. Get a consciousness of where and what you are apart from Christ and from the mercy of God and then, when you perceive well your need, this, with a sense of the greatness of the blessing, will much quicken you as to instancy in prayer.

Endeavor, also, to *get a distinct consciousness of the fact that God must give you this blessing or you will never have it.* It requires time to think over these things, therefore set yourself apart awhile from all other occupations and think on these matters. Say to yourself—Here is such-and-such a spiritual mercy and I can never get it out of myself, for I am a dry well. Nothing can come out of nothing and I am nothing. I cannot bring a clean thing out of an unclean and I am unclean. This spiritual blessing I cannot obtain from my fellow man; nor king nor priest could bring it to me. I cannot climb to heaven after it, nor dive into the abyss to find it. Earth nor heaven can yield it, nor can either time or eternity produce it. God alone must give it to me and He is a sovereign—He has a right to give or to withhold. I cannot claim it of Him as a matter of right—He must give it to me of His mere mercy—it must be a gift of undeserved favor. Oh, if you get that truth well worked into your soul, you will pray earnestly and you will use the right arguments, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness, according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies." God alone can help you and if He refuses, you are undone forever, therefore cry mightily unto Him.

Further to make you instant in prayer *endeavor eagerly to desire the good thing*. Stand not before God, if you would win at His hands, as one who will be content whether or not you receive the blessing. Say not, "Give it or withhold it—it is all the same to me. I knock at Your door and if You open, I will be somewhat pleased, but if Your door is shut, I will be pleased, too." Oh no, such listlessness will never prevail with God. There are times when you must be brought to this condition that you will not be denied. There is a holy "impudency," as the Puritans were known to call it, to which we must be brought—in which we shall with holy boldness dare to say like Jacob, "I will not let You go unless You bless me." Such language would be blasphemy if it were not permitted. It would be presumption if it were not encouraged. But there is little fear of our being too bold, for in these times men are more inclined to keep at a distance than to come too near. We are permitted to use the liberty of obedient, loving children. We are allowed in the holy confidence of faith to resolve that we will seek until we find, we will ask until we receive, we will knock until the door is opened unto us. Our case is urgent and we must press it till our suit is gained. Never was a man brought to such a pass by the grace of God but what speedily the Lord was pleased to open the hand of His liberality and give him according to his desire, but this vehemence must be manifested. A certain person is mentioned in John Bunyan's, "Holy War," whose name is Mr. Desiresawake, a very capital fellow. Cultivate his acquaintance! Alas, there are some who live next door to Mr. Desiresasleep and their prayers are dormant like certain wild beasts in winter. Gladly would I stir them out of their dens. Wake up, man, wake up when you pray, for it is insulting to God to give Him sleepy worship. Dreaming at praying and playing at praying, as some do, are grievous sins. No, no, prayer must be heart work, soul-work, spirit work. Prayer ought to be the sweat of the soul. It should sometimes be even as the bloody sweat of an agonizing heart crying mightily unto the Lord, as Jesus did in the garden. To such the Lord sends down His angel to strengthen them or in some way hears their pleadings in that concerning which they were filled with anguish. Intensity of desire must be exhibited or else it may come to pass that the time of the bestowal is not yet come.

I will suppose, dear brethren that you have followed these directions so far by the help of God's Spirit and now you know your need of the mercy and something of the value of it. You see that God alone can give it you and you are anxiously desirous to have it. Now comes the tug of war—you are to *plead with all your might*. Gather up all your faculties to see whether this thing is a matter of promise or no. Take down the Bible, your charter and your Father's will, and see if there is any part of the charter which promises this good thing to you. When you have found the promise, lay your finger on it. Better still, with your spirit grasp it in your hand and go before God with it. If prayer is as Luther calls it, "bombards Christianorum," the Christian's great gun with which he does bombard heaven, then surely the promise is the shot which he sends forth. Plead the promise by saying, "Lord, do as You have said. Fulfill this word unto Your servant upon which You have caused me to hope." If you do not

seem to prevail with one promise, seek out another and plead it. This, perhaps, will be more to the point—a promise which your very soul seems to suck in as though it were spoken to you newly and freshly, as if never another man had ever received it. Spread this second promise before the Lord. Nothing pleases Him more than seeing His own Word pleaded by His children. Try this and if it is manifest that you have not succeeded, turn to yet another promise and another and another and another—and then plead, "For Your name's sake; for Your truth's sake; for Your covenant's sake." And then come in with the greatest plea of all, "For Jesus' sake and in His name. For the blood's sake, I plead with You, my God. O You that hear prayer, will You not keep touch with Your own Word and be true to Your own Son?" You have prevailed there. By that sign you have conquered. Again it shall be seen that the Lord has listened to the voice of a man.

Still there is one thing more wanted and that is *strong faith*—not only that God is—but that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. You cannot be instant in prayer, nay, you cannot offer an acceptable prayer at all except as you believe in the prayer-hearing God. The modern wise men assure us, with a patronizing air, that prayer is a pious exercise, exceedingly beneficial to ourselves but quite inoperative with God. They are kind enough to allow us to pray, only we must not suppose that it has the slightest effect. And do they think that we are such idiots that we would stand and whistle to the wind and find good for our souls in such a stupid proceeding? They must have formed their notion of our mental condition from their own if they imagine that we should pray if we knew that God did not hear us and would not answer us. Prayer apart from the idea of a hearing God is not praying—it is soliloquizing or in plainer words, a silly talking to yourself such as one sees in half-witted old persons who have outlived what few senses they once possessed. You must believe that God is and that there is real commerce between your soul and God and that your pleadings are a part of the divine way of blessing you, or else you are not praying but maundering and chattering. The Lord does really listen to the pleadings of His people and though He does not alter His ordinance and His decree, yet in some way or other He makes the prayers of His people to be an efficient link in the machinery of His providence and grace so that not without prayer does He bless them—but with it He does bless them abundantly. Dear friends, may the Lord the Holy Spirit stir us all up to be instant in mighty, energetic prayer.

II. Now, secondly, comes the word, CONSTANT, "*continuing* instant in prayer." To go back to the hunting dog with which we set out. We saw him rushing like the wind after his game, but this will not be enough if it only lasts for a little. He must continue running if he is to catch his prey. It matters not how fast the stag-hound goes, if after having kept the pace awhile he begins to slacken—the stag will escape from him. It is a sign of failure in the iron trade when the furnaces are blown out—when business flourishes the fire blazes both day and night—and so will it be with

prayer when the soul is in a flourishing state. If prayer is the Christian's vital breath, how can he leave off praying?

We must maintain the ardor of prayer. We must be intense always. Prayer is not to be a thing of yesterday, but of today and tomorrow until it changes into praise above. Perhaps prayer will continue even in heaven. Certainly the souls under the altar cry, "How long?" And unfulfilled prophecies and promises yet big with future events will be pleaded even there. Praise, however, is the chief characteristic of the future state, as prayer is the characteristic of the present one. We are to get into a good pace—"instant in prayer," and then to keep it up—*continuing* instant in prayer. "That is difficult" says one. Who said it was not? All the processes of the Christian life are difficult. Indeed, they are impossible apart from the abiding help of the divine Spirit, but "the Spirit helps our infirmities." Now then, brethren, that we may be helped to keep up our fervency in prayer, please notice that prayer must be continuous because *it is so singularly mixed up with the whole gospel dispensation*. As the incense filled the temple, so does prayer fill the gospel economy. The blood was upon the mercy seat and upon the altar and the laver and the candlestick and the book. It was sprinkled everywhere in the Jewish Tabernacle and thus atonement was the most conspicuous object in the worship prescribed by the law of Moses. But next to this, prayer was most prominent in the continual calling upon God and in the smoke of the incense by which prayer was symbolized. It is the high privilege of those who are believers in Jesus to draw near unto God with their petitions perpetually. The whole church, like the 12 tribes, is instantly serving God day and night in prayer, hoping for the fulfillment of the promise of the glorious appearing. "Behold, he prays," is the very mark of the individual Christian—and the unity, the life, and the spirituality of the church are best seen in prayer—

"Nor prayer is made on earth alone.
The Holy Sprit pleads
And Jesus, on the eternal throne,
For sinners intercedes."

Prayer was dear to Jesus when He was the Man of Nazareth upon the mountain's lonely side and prayer is dear to Him now that, as the Son of God, He intercedes in glory. Even to Him the covenant has this condition of prayer appended, "Ask of Me, and I will give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession." Prayer is the atmosphere which surrounds Emanuel's land—as the clouds hang on the mountains, so does prayer linger over every great mercy of God.

Prayer is connected with every covenant blessing. Why, beloved, it is to him that calls upon the name of the Lord that the promise of salvation is given. Our heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to those that ask Him. Justification was given to the publican rather than to the Pharisee because he had offered humble, believing, acceptable prayer—whereas the Pharisee asked nothing, but only glorified himself. Adoption begets prayer, for it brings us the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father. From election right onward to perfection in Christ, there is no blessing of

the covenant but what is understood, received, enjoyed, fed upon, and practically used in the way of prayer. Those who would safely navigate the sea of life must pray their passage to heaven.

Moreover, beloved, *prayer has been connected with every living spiritual experience you have ever had*. Will you kindly look back to the hour when you were under the fig tree and Jesus saw you? Were you not at prayer? When you first arose to go to your Father, was not your first step a prayer? When you received the assurance of salvation, was it not in answer to prayer? When His banner over you has been love, have you not felt it sweet to pray? When you have feasted at His table and He has revealed Himself to you as He does not to the world, have you not then been in the spirit of prayer? The hill Mizar and the Hermonites—places you never can forget, those choicest of spots which seem, as you look back along the vista of life to be gleaming with a supernatural splendor—has not prayer been connected with them all? There has been nothing grandly great or good in your spiritual life but Jabbok has flowed near it and the top of Carmel has been near to view where you have wrestled with God and prevailed.

Now, beloved, we are commanded to be constant in our instancy. Is not this right? Is *there any time when we can afford to slacken prayer*? Would you kindly put your finger on the map of the way and tell me where a Christian man may leave off praying? Is it when he prospers? No, for then he needs grace to carry a full cup with a steady hand. Is it when he is in distress? Does not nature itself teach us that in the time of affliction we should especially draw near to God in prayer? When should he pray, nay, when should he not pray? Where may he pray? The answer is he may pray everywhere, for as one has well said, a man who carries his temple about with him is always in a place where he may pray, and know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit? Wherever you go, you carry your temples with you and in every place you may pray and should pray and need to pray and therefore be sure that you do pray. If you are on the housetop with Peter, pray there. And if waiting at table with Nehemiah, pray there. If in the field with Isaac or on the mountain with the Lord or in the sea with Jonah or in a prison with Joseph or in the article of death with Stephen, pray there—

"Long as they live should Christians pray,
For only while they pray they live."

When they are under the wings of the cherubim crying unto God at His mercy seat then are they in the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High and then shall they abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

But especially we ought to be constant in prayer, because *such remarkable gifts are vouchsafed to persistence*. God often gives liberally to prayer when it speaks but once, but frequent pleading begets abundant answering. That is the most soul-enriching prayer which is long in winning its way with God. When prayers, like great ships, have been long on the voyage, you may hope that they have gone far and have gathered rich cargos and will come home freighted with all the best merchandise. If you can but quietly hope and patiently wait, all will be well. The very choicest blessings of heaven are reserved for the Elijahs who can say, "Go again

seven times," for the men who come again and again and again never faint. Wait then upon the Lord with holy persistence of prayer and your reward shall more than repay you. It is good for us to be compelled to pray like this. It exercises the faculties of the soul. It makes men of us. It brings us up from spiritual childhood to perfect manhood. Therefore, be constant in prayer and gather strength for persistent pleading.

No reason can be given why we should not continue in instant prayer. I can suppose one brother saying, "I feel I cannot pray." When you feel you cannot pray, you can be sure that you are more in need of prayer than ever. Is not a disinclination to prayer one of the saddest marks of your soul's condition—one of those reasons which ought, above all others, to drive you to the mercy seat? "Would you say the same, sir, if I tell you that I can pray?" Precisely the same, for now when the wind is favorable you should hoist all sail. If you cannot make progress now, when will you? Therefore, pray when you can pray and pray when you cannot pray. "Alas, sir, I cannot get beyond a groan." Brother, be not distressed, for the best praying in all the world consists of "groanings that cannot be uttered." We may sometimes have a doubt whether the Spirit of God helps us to pray in cheerful prayers, though I do not say that there is any need for the doubt—but we cannot have a question about our sad prayings for it is expressly said He, "makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered." Do you think that the chief end of a Christian's life is to be comfortable? It is often more good for us to mourn like doves than to sing like nightingales. Sometimes there may be more prayer in a sigh than in a long oration. Often do I personally look back upon times of bondage when I cried to God with all my soul and thought I did not pray—and I wish that I prayed now as I did then. Therefore, always pray whether you feel in a mind for prayer or not, still pray. The fishermen at Mentone keep on fishing with their great nets—ay, by the score these fishermen take it out, and haul it in again—and frequently they get no more than one little sardine for their pains; many and many a time I have seen no more than they could hold in their hand as the produce of a net which covered acres of the sea! So why do they go on? Because they are fishermen, and cannot do anything else! You and I are praying men and there is nothing else we can do but wait upon the Lord. So if, after many a throw of the net, we get but one small answer, we will try again, for this is all we can do. "Lord, to whom should we go but unto You?"

Continue in prayer because *the continuance of our instancy in prayer is the test of the reality of our devotion.* Men that are in business and are in earnest cannot afford to open the shop and do a little occasional trade and then put up a notice, "The proprietor of this shop has gone out for an excursion and will resume his business when he feels inclined to." This would be trifling—not trading. And so it is in prayer—a little bit of praying and then a stretch of neglect will prove a delusion and a snare. A poor simpleton who had never been to sea before, when he was going to Australia, asked a friend on board the vessel what the sailors did with the vessel at night. "Do at night?" was the reply, "Why, sail as fast as

they can go." "I did not know," he said, "they worked in the night; I thought they stopped the ship." He must have thought he was out on some pleasure excursion along the coast and that the yacht would anchor when the sun went down—but he was in an ocean clipper which was out for work and not for play. The man who means business must sail whether it is dark or light, and so in prayer we must serve God constantly, both day and night. Real prayers are constant prayers. There is a fish, you know, that sometimes attempts to fly, but it is no bird for all that. It only takes a little flight and then it is in the water again, but a true bird keeps on the wing, especially if it is such a bird as the eagle whose untiring wings bear it above the clouds. Beware of prayers which leap up like a grasshopper and are soon down again. Let your prayers have the wings of a dove. Let them fly away from earth and rest in God. Hypocrites pray by fits and starts—the genuine Christian "prays without ceasing."

Beware of judging yourselves by certain spasms of prayer. When I put my lamp out last night, as I thought, it flashed up, then went down again and yet again flashed up. It did so many times as I stood waiting, but I knew it must go out before long. Some have a way of flashing a prayer or two, but their piety is only a dying light—it will all be over soon. Continue instant in prayer—it shall be the test of whether your prayer is a lamp of the Lord or a dying light of your own kindling.

Beloved, we must continue in prayer, but the Holy Spirit alone can enable us to do it. We may, however, be much helped in it by occasionally setting apart a special time. Days of prayer and hours of prayer and set seasons of prayer are very helpful. We ought to have our appointed seasons each day, but special times over and above our regular custom may stir the fire and enable it to burn more brightly. To unite with other Christians in prayer is often very helpful. Private prayer is more important than public prayer under many aspects and is a better test of a Christian, but still public prayer often reacts upon private devotion and when two or three are together and are agreed as touching the kingdom, their supplications will often be helpful to each other and obtain the thing which they desire.

III. Our last word is EXPECTANT. It is not in the text verbally, but it must be there because there will be no such thing as instancy or constancy unless there is an expectation and a belief that God can and will give that which we seek. Let us go back to our dog again—the dog would not run at so great a rate if he did not expect to seize his prey, but see how every limb is stretched with intensity and he goes over hedge and ditch after his game because he has almost seized it. And though it flies before him with all its might, yet he is close upon it. There is no praying with any fervor unless there is faith that God will hear you—at least if instancy can be felt for a while, constancy cannot be kept up long without it. Expectancy is the very reason of prayer. Some prefer to pray because it is their duty and their custom, but real prayer usually springs from the expectancy that God will hear. I was awakened at about four o'clock this morning by a sharp, shrill sound. I thought it was a swallow screaming

by the window and I fell asleep again. But I was soon aroused by the repetition of the same sharp sound. A young bird had found its way into my room and was crying for liberty. I left my bed and opened the window to let the captive free. It did not seem to know its way and so I caught it and gently placed it at the window and in a moment it flew to the oak tree close by and sat itself down. I watched its movement. The moment it had perched itself comfortably, it began to utter sharp cries and it turned its little head round on all sides as if looking for someone. It was crying for its mother and why? *Because it expected to be fed*. And why did it expect to be fed? *Because it had been fed before*. If it had been a full-grown bird, it would not have called for food, but would have helped itself. But this poor little creature had been nourished by its parents and it was looking round to be supplied again. This is why we pray. O Lord, You have supplied our wants so long and so often in answer to prayer that we are in the way of it and now we pray not only because we ought to do so, but because it has become natural to us to pray—and we expect You to hear us. When You do hear us, we bless You, but we are not *surprised* as though it were a strange thing. Your truth causes great admiration but no astonishment, for it is like You to keep Your word. We are poor dependent children and You a wise and tender Father. You have never left us and you will never leave us and so we continue instant in prayer because we are expectant of Your grace. Some professors seldom exercise expectancy in prayer, but the soul of prayer is gone when you have no expectation. God will hear the cry of your desire, but the hand into which He will put the mercy is the hand of your expectation. You must believe that you have the blessing or you will not have it unless it is by some extraordinary mercy beyond what is promised. His usual way is to raise our expectations so that we look for the favor and then He sends it. If some people looked for answers to prayer, they might soon have them, for their prayers would be answered by themselves. I was reminded of that by a little boy whose father prayed in the family that the Lord would visit the poor and relieve their wants. When he had finished, his little boy said, "Father, I wish I had your money." "Why so?" "Because," he said, "I would answer your prayers for you." "Which prayers, John?" "Why, father, you prayed that the poor might be helped and you could do it very well with your own money." I like better still that story of the good man at the prayer meeting, who reading the list of prayers found one for a poor widow, that her distress might be relieved. So he began to read it, but stopped and added, "We won't trouble the Lord with that. I will attend to that myself." Numbers of prayers are of that kind—we are praying God to do what we ought to do ourselves and that is sheer impertinence. If we really prayed in earnest, expecting to be heard, our answer would often come in this very way—by our being stirred up to see that the Lord had heard us. The Lord might well say to us, "You say, 'Your kingdom come.' Arise and help to make My kingdom come! You ask that My name may be hallowed. Go, yourself, and hallow My name." Oh, that we had the expectancy which would teach us practical action so that we should find the answer to our prayer given before we asked, according to the

promise, "Before they call I will answer them and while they are yet speaking I will hear."

I had many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now, for the time has passed. I shall close by recommending to all of you one simple but very comprehensive prayer. It was offered by a poor man in Fife and it was copied out by the Duchess of Gordon and found among her papers when she died. "O Lord, give me grace to feel my need of Your grace! Give me grace to ask for Your grace. Give me grace to receive your grace! And when in Your grace You have given me grace, give me grace to use Your grace!" See you not what scope there is for prayer! You will never need to leave off pleading for want of subjects. Continue, therefore, to be instant in it.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans 12.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—30, 981, 978.

GIRLS' ORPHANAGE—We have purchased "The Hawthorns," near the Boys' Orphanage, for £4,000, in order to commence an institution for fatherless girls. We earnestly desire to pay the money when it is due, namely, on the 15th of July next. This will need not only liberal help, but help given speedily, for the time is very limited. Up to this moment in all our movements, we have paid our way with ready money and it would rejoice our heart if we should be enabled to do so now. About £1,200 has been given or promised.

C. H. SPURGEON

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THE RED HEIFER
NO. 1481

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 29, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Hebrews 9:13, 14.

BELOVED brethren in Christ, you dwell in great nearness to God. He calls you "a people near unto Him." His grace has made you His sons and daughters and He is a Father unto you. In you is His word fulfilled, "I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Remember that your favored position as children of God has placed you under a peculiar discipline, for now God deals with you as with sons—and sons are under household law. The Lord will be sanctified in them that come near to Him. Special favor involves special rule. There were no strict laws made as to the behavior of the Amalekites, Amorites, and Egyptians because they were far off from God and the times of their ignorance He winked at, but the Lord set Israel apart to be His people and He came and dwelt in the midst of the congregation. The sacred tent wherein He displayed His presence was pitched in the center of the camp and there the great King uplifted His banner of fire and cloud. Hence, as the Lord brought the people so near to Himself, He put them under special laws, such as belong to His palace rather than to the outskirts of His dominion. They were bound to keep themselves very pure, for they bore the vessels of the Lord and were a nation of priests before Him. They ought to have been holy spiritually, and being in their childhood, they were taught this by laws referring to external cleanliness. Read the laws laid down in Leviticus and see what care was required of the favored nation and how jealously they were to keep themselves from defilement.

Just as the children of Israel in the wilderness were put under stringent regulations, so do those who live near to God come under a holy discipline in the house of the Lord. "Even our God is a consuming fire." We are not now speaking of our salvation or of our justification as sinners, but of the Lord's dealings towards us as saints. In that respect we must walk carefully with Him and watch our steps that we offend not. Our earnest desire is so to behave ourselves in His house that He may always permit us to have access with boldness to His presence and may never be compelled to reject our prayers because we have been falling into sin. Our heart's desire and inward longing is that we may never lose our Father's smile. If we have lost fellowship with Him, even for an hour, our cry is, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat," for when we are in fellowship with God we are happy,

we are strong, we are full of heavenly aspirations and emotions. Beneath the sky there is no joy like that of communion with God—it is incomparable and inexpressible and therefore when we lose the presence of God, even for a little, we are like a dove bereaved of its mate which ceases not to grieve. Our heart and our flesh cry out for God, for the living God. When shall we come and appear before God?

Now, beloved, in order that we may learn how to renew our fellowship with God whenever we lose it by a sense of sin, I have selected the subject of this morning. If the Holy Spirit will graciously enlighten us, we shall see how the conscience can be kept clean so that the heart may be able to dwell with God. We shall see our danger of defilement and the way by which our uncleanness can be put away—may we have grace given to avoid the pollutions which would hinder fellowship—and grace to seek the purification by which uncleanness is removed and fellowship restored. I shall first endeavor to *describe the type* which is alluded to by the apostle in the words, "The ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean." And then, secondly, we shall *magnify the Antitype*, dwelling upon the words, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

I. LET US DESCRIBE THE TYPE. In the nineteenth chapter of Numbers you will find the type. Be so good as to open your Bibles and refresh your memories.

First, the type mentions ceremonial defilements which were the symbols of the uncleanness caused by sin. The Israelites could very readily render themselves unclean so as to be unfit to go up to the tabernacle of God. There were uncleannesses connected both with birth and with death, with meats and with drinks, with garments and with houses. The rules were very minute and all-pervading so that a man could scarcely move abroad or even remain within his own tent without incurring uncleanness in one way or another—and becoming unfit to enter the courts of the Lord or to be an accepted member of the congregation. In the passage in Numbers which is now before us (19:16), the one source of defilement dealt with is death. "Whosoever touches one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days." Now, death is peculiarly the symbol of sin as well as the fruit of sin. Sin, like death, defaces the image of God in man. As soon as death grasps the body of a man, it destroys the bloom of beauty and the dignity of strength and drives forth from the human form that mysterious something which is the token of life within. However comely a corpse may appear for a time, yet it is defaced—the excellence of life has departed and alas, in a few hours or at longest in a few days, the image of God begins utterly to pass away—corruption and the worm commence their desolating work and horror follows in their train. Abraham, however much he may love his Sarah, soon becomes anxious to bury his beloved dead out of his sight. Now, what death does for the "human face," that sin does for the spiritual image of God upon us. It utterly defaces it. Human nature in perfection is a coin of the realm of God, minted by the great King, but by sin it is battered and defaced—to the great dishonor of the King whose image and superscription it bears.

Hence sin is most obnoxious to God and death is obnoxious as the type of sin.

The defilements which came to the Israelite by death must have been very frequent. As a whole generation died in the wilderness, most of the inhabitants must again and again have come under the law of uncleanness on account of the death of parents or friends. In the field, a man might dig up human remains or plow over a grave or find a body slain by accident and he was at once unclean. How frequent, therefore, were the occasions of defilement! But ah, my brethren, not so frequent as the occasions of pollution to our consciences in such a world as this, for in a thousand ways we err and transgress—

"Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,"

where never sin might reach my soul again! But it is in vain to sigh in this fashion. Even if we could escape from the throng of men, we should not thereby escape from sin. The Israelite might meet with defilement even in his tent. I have already reminded you that these statutes about the dead present to us only a part of the occasions of defilement which surrounded the people of Israel—they were much more numerous than this. A man might become unclean even in his sleep, so closely did the law track him into his most secret places and surround his most unguarded hours. Even thus does sin beset us. Like a dog at one's heels, it is always with us! Like our shadow, it follows us, go where we may. Yes, and when the sun shines not and shadows are gone, sin is still there. Where shall we flee from its presence and where shall we hide from its power? When we would do good, evil is present with us. How humbled we ought to be at the recollection of this!

The Israelite became unclean even in the act of doing good, for assuredly it was a good deed to bury the dead. A man would be defiled if out of charity, he helped to inter the poor or the slain or the poor relics of mortality which might be exposed upon the plain—and yet this was a praiseworthy action. Alas, there is sin even in our holy things. A morality so pure that no human eye can detect a flaw may yet be faulty to the eye of God. Brethren, sin stains our piety and pollutes our devotion. We do not even pray without needing to ask God to forgive the prayer. Our acts of faith have a measure of unbelief in them, for the faith is never so strong as it ought to be. Our penitential tears have some grit of impenitence in them and our heavenly aspirations have a measure of carnality to degrade them. The evil of our nature clings to all that we do. Who shall bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. One way or another defilement will come upon us. We have been once washed in the blood of Jesus and we are clean before the bar of God and yet in the divine family we need that our feet be washed after walking awhile in this dusty world and there is not one disciple who is above the need of this washing. To one and all our Lord says, "If I wash you not, you have no part in Me."

The touching of the dead not only made the man unclean, but he became a fountain of defilement. "And whatsoever the unclean person touches shall be unclean; and the soul that touches it shall be unclean until evening." While a man was unclean he might not go up to the worship of God and he was in danger of being cut off from among the con-

gregation, "Because," says the law, "he has defiled the sanctuary of the Lord." Pollution went forth from the polluted. Do you and I sufficiently remember how much of evil we are spreading when we are out of communion with God? Every ungenerous temper creates the like in others. We never cast a proud look without exciting resentment and bad feelings in others. Somebody or other will follow our example if we are slothful—and thus we may be doing great mischief even when we are doing nothing. You cannot even bury your talent in a napkin without setting an example to others to do the same and were that example followed by all, how dreadful would be the consequences! Observe that I am not now speaking of outside sinners, but of the saints of God. As the ordinances in the chapter before us were for Israel, so these things are spoken to those in whom the Spirit of the Lord is. My soul's longing is that we may walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing and may not become unfit for communion with Him.

This uncleanness prevented the man from going up to the worship of God and it separated him from that great, permanent congregation which was called to dwell in God's house by residing all around the holy place. He was, so to speak, excommunicated, suspended—at any rate, in his communion. He could bring no offering—he could not stand among the multitude and view the solemn worship. He was unclean and must regard himself so. Do children of God ever get here? Ah, dear friends, so far as our consciences are concerned, we too often come among the unclean. We are not polluted as the heathen, nor condemned with the world, but as children of God we feel that we have erred and our conscience smites us. Sin is already put away from us, as we are criminals tried before a judge, but it comes upon the conscience even as a child's faults cause him to grieve. It is from the conscience that this uncleanness is to be purged and our whole sermon is upon that matter. I speak not of the actual taking away of sin before God, but the removal of its defilement from the conscience so that communion with God may be possible. Remember the word of the Lord, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you that He will not hear." When sin is on your conscience it wants no law to prevent your communion with God, for you cannot approach Him—you are afraid to do so and you have a distaste for it. Until the pardoning blood speaks peace within your spirit, you cannot draw near to God. The apostle says, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." It is the washing which enables us to draw near. We shrink. We tremble. We find communion impossible until we are made clean.

This much about the defilements described in the chapter. Now concerning the cleansing which it mentions.

The defilement was frequent, but the cleansing was always ready. At a certain time, all the people of Israel brought a red heifer to be used in the expiation. It was not at the expense of one person or tribe, but the whole congregation brought the red cow to be slain. It was to be their sacrifice and it was brought for them all. It was not led, however, up to the holy place for sacrifice, but it was brought forth outside the camp and there it was slaughtered in the presence of the priest and wholly burnt with fire,

not as a sacrifice upon the altar, but as a polluted thing which was to be made an end of outside the camp. It was not a regular sacrifice or we should have found it described in Leviticus. It was an ordinance entirely by itself, as setting forth quite another side of truth.

To return to the chapter. The red heifer was killed before the uncleanness was committed, just as our Lord Jesus Christ was made a curse for sin long, long ago. Before you and I had lived to commit the uncleanness, there was a sacrifice provided for us. For the easing of our conscience we shall be wise to view this sacrifice as that of a substitute for sin and consider the results of that expiation. Sin on the conscience needs for its remedy the result of the Redeemer's substitution.

The red heifer was slain—the victim fell beneath the butcher's axe. It was then all taken up—skin, flesh, blood, dung, everything. No trace of it must be left and it was all burnt with fire, together with cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet wool which I suppose had been used in the previous sprinkling of the heifer's blood and so must be consumed with it. The whole was destroyed outside the camp! Even as our Lord, though in Himself without spot, was made sin for us and suffered outside the camp, feeling the withdrawing of God while He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Ah, what it cost our Lord to come into our place and to bear the iniquities of men!

Then the ashes were collected and laid in a clean place accessible to the camp. Everybody knew where the ashes were and whenever there was any uncleanness, they went to this ash heap and took away a small portion. Whenever the ashes were spent, they brought another red heifer and did the same as they had done before—so that there always might be this purification for the unclean.

But while this red cow was slaughtered for all and the blood was sprinkled towards the holy place for all, no one derived any personal benefit from it in reference to his own uncleanness unless he made a personal use of it. When a man became unclean he procured a clean person to go on his behalf to take a little of the ashes and to put them in a cup with running water and then he had the clean person sprinkle this water of purification upon him, upon his tent, and all the vessels in it. By that sprinkling, at the end of seven days, the unclean person was purified. There was no other method of purification from his uncleanness but this. It is so with us. Today the living water of the divine Spirit's sacred influences must take up the result of our Lord's substitution and this must be applied to our consciences. That which remains of Christ after the fire has passed upon Him, even the eternal merits—the enduring virtue of our great sacrifice—must be sprinkled upon us through the Spirit of our God. Then are we clean in conscience, but not till then. We have two degrees of purification by this means, as in the type. Our Lord rose again on the third day—and blessed are they who receive the third day justification by the resurrection of the Lord. Thus is sin removed from the conscience, but as long as we are here in this body there will be some tremblings, some measure of unrest because of sin within. But blessed be God, there is a seventh day purification coming which will complete the cleansing. When the eternal Sabbath breaks, then shall be the last sprinkling with the hyssop and we shall be clean and we shall enter into

the rest which remains for the people of God, clean every whit. We shall come before God, at last without spot or wrinkle or any such thing and be as able to commune with Him as if we had never transgressed, being presented faultless before His presence with exceedingly great joy.

Thus much concerning the type with which we have already mingled some degree of exposition.

I. LET US MAGNIFY THE GREAT ANTI-TYPE. "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies to the purification of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ?" How much more? He does not give us the measure but leaves it with a note of interrogation. We shall never be able to tell how much more, for the difference between the blood of bulls and of goats and the blood of Christ—the difference between the ashes of a red cow and the eternal merits of the Lord Jesus must be infinite. Let us help your judgments while we set forth the exceeding greatness of our mighty Expiator by whom we are reconciled to God.

First, then, *our defilement is much greater*, for the defilement spoken of in the text is on the conscience. Now, I believe that the Israelite, when he was rendered unclean by touching a corpse by necessity or a piece of a bone by accident, felt nothing on his conscience, for there was no sin in the matter—he was only ceremonially unclean and that was all. His ceremonial disability troubled him, for he would be glad to go up to the tabernacle of the Lord and hold fellowship with the hosts of Israel, but there was nothing on his conscience. If there had been, the blood of bulls and goats could not have helped him. Beloved, you and I know what it is at times to have defilement upon the conscience and to go mourning because we have erred from the Lord's commands. The ungodly do not thus sorrow—their conscience, by fits and starts, accuses them, but they never listen to its accusations so as to feel their inability to draw near to God. Nay, they will even go with a guilty conscience to their knees and pretend to offer to God the sacrifice of prayer and praise while still they are unforgiven, alienated, and rebellious. You and I, if we are indeed the Lord's people, cannot do this. Guilt on our conscience is to us a horrible thing. There are no pains of body—there are no tortures inflicted by the Inquisition which are at all comparable to the whips of burning wire which lash the guilty conscience. You hear persons speak about the horrible figures of medieval ages with regard to hell and the strong metaphors sometimes used by the orthodox to this day. Let them remember that they are only figures and then let any man who has felt the agonies of a guilty conscience judge whether the figures can possibly be overdrawn. It is an awful thing to feel yourself guilty, and the better a man you are, the more will it grieve you to be consciously in a wrong state. I ask any truly regenerate man here who at bottom has an assurance that his sin is already forgiven before God, whether he can do wrong without smarting? Whenever you have transgressed and you are conscious of it, though you do not doubt the love of God to you, are you not like one who has all his bones broken? I know you are and the better a man you are, the more intense will have been the terror of your spirit while guilt has been upon your conscience in any degree. Well, now, that which can take

guilt off the conscience must be infinitely greater than that which can merely put away a ceremonial defilement.

Brethren, guilt on the conscience is a most effectual bar to drawing near to God. The Lord bids His people come near to Him and there is a way of access always open, but as long as you are conscious of sin you cannot use that way of access. We can come to God as sinners to seek pardon, but we cannot come before the Lord as dear children while there is any quarrel between us and our great Father. No, we must be clean or we cannot approach our God. See how the priests washed their feet at the laver before they offered incense unto the Lord. We cannot have fellowship with God while there is a sense of unconfessed and unforgiven sin upon us. "Be you reconciled to God" is a text for saints as well as for sinners. Children may quarrel with a father as well as rebels with a king. There must be oneness of heart with God or there is an end to communion and therefore must the conscience be purged.

The man who was unclean *could* have come up to the tabernacle if there had been no law to prevent it and it is possible that he could have worshipped God in spirit, notwithstanding his ceremonial disqualification. The defilement was no barrier in itself except so far as it was typical—but sin on the conscience is a natural wall between God and the soul. You cannot get into loving communion until the conscience is at ease. Therefore, I charge you, fly at once to Jesus for peace.

Beloved, if our consciences were more fully developed than they are, we should have as great a sense of the frequency of our uncleanness as ever the thoughtful Israelite had of his danger of ceremonial uncleanness. I tell you solemnly that the talk which we have heard lately about perfection in the flesh comes of ignorance of the law and of self. When I have read expressions which seem to claim that the utterers were free from sin in thought and word and deed, I have been sorry for the deluded victims of self-conceit and shuddered at their spirit. The sooner this boasting is purged out of the Church of God the better. God's true people have the spirit of truth within them, convincing them of sin and not the proud and lying spirit which leads men to say they have no sin. True saints abide in the place of penitence and constant faith in the atoning blood and dare not exalt themselves as the Pharisee who cried, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are." "There is not a just man upon earth that does good and sins not" (Ecc 7:20). Why, beloved, according to my own experience, we are constantly being defiled by being in this polluted world and going up and down in it. As a man could not take a walk without stumbling over a grave, nor could he shut himself up in his house without the danger of death entering there, so are we everywhere liable to sin. It seems all but inevitable so long as we are in this body and in this sinful world that we should come into contact with sin in some form or other—and any contact with sin is defiling. Our Lord could live among sinners and remain undefiled because there was no evil in His heart—but in our case sin without awakes the echoes from within and so causes a measure of consent and defilement. The will more or less yields the temptation and when the will does not yield, the imagination plays the traitor and the affections parley and so betray the soul. Although it may be accompanied with a resolve not to fall into evil, the very thought

of evil is sin. Sin does not cross over the sensitive plate of our soul as it is exposed in its daily camera without leaving, even if we do not see it ourselves, some trace and stain which God sees. Our fellow men are a terrible source of defilement to us. Did you not notice in the chapter which we read (Numbers 19) that he who touched the dead body of a man was unclean seven days? Now, if you look in Leviticus 11:22, you will see that whosoever touched the carcass of an unclean beast was only unclean until the evening. Thus a dead man was seven times more defiling than a dead beast. Such is God's estimate of fallen, unregenerate man—and it is a just one—for wicked men do many things which brute beasts never do. All ungodly men defile us and I am not sure that I may end there. The truth is still wider. I do not care how you pick your company—and you ought to pick it with great choiceness—but even if you associate with none but saints, they will be an occasion of sin to you at some time or other. There will be something about them, ay, even about their holiness which may cause you to idolize them or envy them and in some way or other cause you to sin. You cannot, as you are a man of unclean lips and dwell among a people of unclean lips, be altogether without uncleanness and therefore you will always have need to use the way of cleansing which the Lord has prepared and revealed.

Remember that in the type the least touch defiled—if they only picked up a bone, the Israelites were unclean. If they only walked over a grave, they were unclean. My brethren, the best of you can hardly read in the newspaper an account of a crime without some taint clinging to you. You cannot see sin in another without standing in fearful jeopardy of being in some degree infected thereby. Sin is of so subtle and penetrating a nature that long before we are aware, it tarnishes our brightness and eats into our spirit. The pure and holy God alone is undefiled, but as for the best of His saints, they need to veil their faces in His presence and cry, "Unclean, unclean."

Under the old law men might be unclean who did not know it. A man might have touched a bone and not be aware of it, yet the law operated just as much. He might walk across a grave and not know it, but he was unclean. I fear that our proud sense of what we think to be our inward cleanness is simply the stupidity of our conscience. If our conscience were more sensitive and tender, it would perceive sin where now we congratulate ourselves that everything is pure. My brethren, this teaching of mine puts us into a very lowly place, but the lowlier our position, the better and the safer for us and the more we shall be able to prize the expiation by which we draw near to God.

Since the stain is upon the conscience, its removal is a far greater work than is the removal of a mere ritual uncleanness. Secondly upon this head, *our sacrifice is greater in itself*. I will not dwell upon each point of its greatness lest I weary you, but just notice that in the slaughter of the heifer, blood was presented and sprinkled towards the holy place seven times, though it came not actually into it. So in the atonement through which we find peace of conscience there is blood, for "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." That is a settled decree of the Eternal Government and the conscience will never get peace till it understands the mystery of the blood. We need not only the sufferings of

Christ, but the death of Christ, which is set forth by His blood. The substitute must die. Death was our doom and death for death did Christ render unto the eternal God. It is by a sense of our Lord's substitutionary death that the conscience becomes purged from dead works.

Furthermore, the heifer itself was offered. After the blood was sprinkled towards the tabernacle by the priestly hand, the victim itself was utterly consumed. Read now our text, "Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered up Himself without spot unto God." Our Lord Jesus Christ gave not merely His death, but His whole person, with all that appertained to it, to be our substitutionary sacrifice. He offered Himself, His person, His glory, His holiness, His life, His very self in our stead. But, brethren, if a poor heifer when it was offered and consumed made the unclean man clean, how much more shall we be cleansed by Jesus, since He gave Himself, His glorious self, in whom dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily? Oh what a sacrifice is this!

It is added that our Lord did this "by the eternal Spirit." The heifer was not a spiritual, but a carnal offering. The creature knew nothing of what was being done, it was the involuntary victim. But Christ was under the impulses of the Holy Spirit, which were poured upon Him and He was moved by Him to render up Himself a sacrifice for sin. Hence somewhat of the greater efficacy of His death, for the willingness of the sacrifice greatly enhanced its value. To give you another and probably a better interpretation of the words, there was the eternal Spirit linked with the manhood of Christ our Lord and by Him, He gave Himself unto God. He was God as well as man and that eternal Godhead of His lent an infinite value to the sufferings of His human frame, so that He offered Himself as a whole Christ, in the energy of His eternal power and Godhead. Oh, what a sacrifice is that on Calvary! It is by the blood of the man Christ that you are saved and yet it is written, "The church of God which He"—that is God—"has redeemed with His own blood." One who is both God and man has given Himself as a sacrifice for us. Is not the sacrifice inconceivably greater in the fact than it is in the type? Ought it not most effectually to purge our conscience?

After they had burnt the heifer, they swept up the ashes. All that could be burnt had been consumed. Our Lord was made a sacrifice for sin, what remains of Him? Not a few ashes, but the whole Christ, which still remains, to die no more, but to abide forever unchanged. He came uninjured through the fires and now He ever lives to make intercession for us. It is the application of His eternal merit which makes us clean and is not that eternal merit inconceivably greater than the ashes of a heifer can ever be?

Now, my brethren, I want you for a moment to recollect that our Lord Himself was spotless, pure and perfect and yet—speak it with bated breath—God "has made Him to be sin for us," even Him who knew no sin. Whisper it with still greater awe, "He was made a curse for us"—yes, a curse, as it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." That red heifer, though without spot and never having borne a yoke, was regarded as a polluted thing. Take it out of the camp. It must not live. Kill it. It is a polluted thing, burn it right up for God cannot endure it. Behold and wonder that God's own ever blessed, adorable Son in inconceivable

condescension of unutterable love, took the place of sin, the place of the sinner—and was numbered with the transgressors. He must die. Hang Him up on a cross. He must be forsaken of men and even deserted of God. "It pleased the Father to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief; He shall make His soul an offering for sin." "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"—not the punishment merely, but the iniquity, the very sin itself was laid upon the Ever Blessed. The wise men of our age say it is impossible that sin should be lawfully imputed to the innocent. That is what the philosophers say, but God declares that it was done. "He has made Him to be sin who knew no sin." Therefore, it was possible. Yes, it is done. It is finished. The sacrifice then is much greater. "How much more," we may cry exultingly as we think of it, "shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Now we will take a step further. As the defilement and the sacrifice were greater, *so the purging is much greater*. The purifying power of the blood of Christ must be much greater than the purging power of the water mixed with the ashes of the heifer. For, first, that could not purge conscience from sin, but the application of the atonement can do it and does do it. I am not going to speak this morning about doctrine at all, but about fact. Did you ever feel the atonement of Christ applied by the Holy Spirit to your conscience? Then I am certain of it that the change upon your mind has been as sudden and glorious as if the darkness of midnight had glowed into the brightness of noonday. I remember well its effects upon my soul at the first—how it broke my bonds and made my heart dance with delight. But I have found it equally powerful since then, for when I am examining myself before God, it sometimes comes to pass that I fix my eye upon some one evil which I have done and I turn it over until the memory of it eats into my very soul like caustic acid or like a gnawing worm or like coals of fire. I have tried to argue that the fault was excusable in me or that there were certain circumstances which rendered it almost impossible that I could do otherwise, but I have never succeeded in quieting my conscience in that fashion. Yet I am soon at rest when I come before the Lord and cry, "Lord, though I am Your own dear child, I am unclean by reason of this sin. Apply, again, the merit of my Lord's atoning sacrifice, for have You not said, "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous?" Lord, hear His advocacy and pardon my offenses." My brethren, the peace which thus comes is very sweet. You cannot pray acceptably before that peace and you may thank God that you cannot, for it is a dreadful thing to be able to go on with your devotions as well under a sense of guilt as when the conscience is at rest. It is an ill child that can be happy while its father is displeased. A true child can do nothing till he is forgiven.

Now, the sprinkling of the ashes of the heifer upon the unclean was not comprehensible as to its effect by anybody who received it. I mean that there was no obvious connection between the cause and the effect. Supposing an Israelite had been unclean and had been sprinkled with this water? He might now go up to the house of the Lord—but would he

see any reason for the change? He would say, "I have received the water of separation and I am clean, but I do not know why the sprinkling of those ashes should make me clean except that God has so appointed." Brethren, you and I do know how it is that God has made us clean, for we know that Christ has suffered in our stead. Substitution explains the mystery and hence it has much more effect upon the conscience than an outward, ritualistic form which could not be explained. Conscience is the understanding exercised upon moral subjects and that which convinces the understanding that all is right soon gives peace to the conscience.

Time presses and therefore I will only just say that as the ashes of the heifer were for all the camp, so are Christ's merits for all His people. As they were put where they were accessible, so may you always come and partake of the cleansing power of Christ's precious atonement. As a mere sprinkling made the unclean clean, even so may you come and be cleansed even though your faith is but little and you seem to get but little of Christ. O brethren, the Lord God in His infinite mercy gives you to know the power of the great sacrifice to work peace in you—not after three or seven days, but at once, and peace not merely for a time, but forever.

One riddle I must explain to you. Solomon, according to the Jewish tradition, declared that he did not understand why the ashes of the heifer made everybody unclean except those who were unclean already. You saw in the reading that the priest, the man who killed the red cow, the person who swept up the ashes, and he who mixed the ashes with water and sprinkled them were all rendered unclean by those acts—and yet the ashes purified the unclean. Is not this analogous to the riddle of the bronze serpent? It was by a serpent that the people were bitten—and it was by a serpent of brass that they were healed. Christ's being regarded as unclean that we become clean and the operation of His sacrifice is just like that of the ashes, for it both reveals uncleanness and removes it. If you are clean and you think of Christ's death, what a sense of sin it brings upon you! You judge of the sin by the atonement. If you are unclean, drawing near to Christ takes that sin away.—

"Thus while His death my sin displays
In all its blackest hue,
Such is the mystery of grace,
It seals my pardon, too."

If we think we are unclean, a sight of the atoning blood makes us see how unclean we are. And if we judge ourselves unclean, then the application of the atoning sacrifice gives our conscience rest.

Now, what is all this business about? This slain heifer—I understand that, for it admitted the unclean Israelites to the courts of the Lord. But this Christ of God offering Himself without spot by the eternal Spirit—what is that for? The object of it is *a service far higher*—it is that we may be purged from dead works to serve the living God. The dead works are gone, God absolves you, you are clean and you feel it. What then? Will you not abhor dead works for the future? Sin is death. Labor to keep from it. Inasmuch as you are delivered from the yoke of sin, go forth and serve God. Since He is the living God and evidently hates death and makes it to be an uncleanness to Him, get you to living things. Offer to

God living prayers and living tears, love Him with living love, trust Him with living faith, serve Him with living obedience.

Be all alive with His life—not only have life—but have it more abundantly. He has purged you from the defilement of death, now live in the beauty and glory and excellency of the divine life and pray the Holy Spirit to quicken you that you may abide in full fellowship with God. If an unclean person had been made clean and had then said, "I will not worship the Lord, neither will I serve Him," we should account him a wretched being! And if any person here were to say, "My sin is forgiven and I know it, but I will do nothing for God," we might well cry, "Ah, wretched man!" What a hypocrite and a deceiver such a person must be. Where pardon is received at the hands of the Lord, the soul is sure to feel a love to God rising within itself. He who has had much forgiven is certain to love much and to do much for Him by whom that forgiveness has been obtained.

The Lord bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Numbers 19.
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OUR CHANGE OF MASTERS
NO. 1482

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 6, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Being then made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness." Romans 6:18.

MAN was made to rule. In the divine original he was intended for a king who should have dominion over the beasts of the field and the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea. He was designed to be the lord-lieutenant of this part of creation and the form of his body and the dignity of his countenance betoken it. He walks erect among the animals, while they move upon all fours. He subjugates and tames them to perform his will and the fear and dread of him is upon all creatures, for they know their sovereign. Yet is it equally true that man was made to serve. At his beginning he was placed in the garden to keep it and to dress it and so to serve his Maker. His natural feebleness, his dependence upon rain and sun and dew—his instinctive awe of an unseen and omnipotent Spirit indicate that he is not the chief of the universe, but a subordinate being whose lot it is to serve. We find within man various powers and propensities seeking to get dominion over him so that his mind is also capable of servitude. The appetites which are essential for the sustenance of his bodily frame, even such as eating and drinking, endeavor to master him—and if they can, they will do so—and reduce him below the level of the swine. Man is in part spirit, but he is also in part animal—and the animal strives to get dominion over the spiritual—and in many, many men it does so till they are utterly degraded. Nothing can be worse than a soul enslaved by such a body as that of man. The brute nature of man is the worst sort of brute. There is no beast in wolf or lion or serpent that is so brutish as the beast in man. Did I not tell you last Sabbath that whereas, according to the Levitical law, he that touched a dead animal was unclean till the evening, he who touched a dead man was unclean seven days; for man is seven times more a polluting creature than any of the beasts of the field when his animal nature rules him?

If evil aims at ruling man, the good Spirit also strives with him. When God of His infinite mercy visits man by His Spirit, that Spirit does not come as a neutral power to dwell quietly within man and to share His heart with the Prince of Darkness, but He enters with full intent to reign. Hence there is a conflict which cannot be ended by an armistice, but must be carried on to the end and that end will be found either in the driving out of the evil or in the thrusting out of the good—for one or the other, either the Prince of Darkness or the King of Light, will have dominion over man. Man must have a master. He cannot serve two masters, but he must serve one. Of all sorts of men this has been true and it has

perhaps been most clearly seen in those who were evidently made to lead their fellow men. It is specially seen in such a man, for instance, as Alexander, a true king of men, so heroic and great-hearted that one does not wonder that armies were fired with enthusiasm by his presence and drove everything before them. Alexander conquered the world and yet on occasions he became the captive of drunkenness and the bondsman of his passionate temper. At such times the king of men, the vanquisher of armies, was little better than a raving maniac. Look for further illustration at the busts of the emperors of Rome, the masters of the world. Study their faces and mark what groveling creatures they must have been. Rome had many slaves, but he who wore her purple was the most in bonds. No slave that ground at the mill or died in the amphitheatre, was more in bondage than such men as Tiberius and Nero, who were the bond-slaves of their passions. High rank does not save a man from being under a mastery—neither does learning nor philosophy deliver men from this bondage, for the teachers of liberty have not themselves been free, but it has happened as the apostle says, "while they promise them liberty they themselves are the servants of corruption." Solomon himself, with all his wisdom, played the fool exceedingly, and though he was the most sagacious ruler of his age, he became for a while completely subject to his fleshly desires.

Man is born to be a servant and a servant he must be. *Who shall be his master?* That is the question. Our text proves the point with which I have started, for it speaks of "being made free from sin" and in the same breath adds, "You became the servants of righteousness." There is no in-between—there does not appear to be a moment left for an independent state, but out of one servitude we pass into another. Do not think I made a mistake in the use of the word servitude. I might have translated the Greek word by that of slave and have been correct. "Being made free from sin, you were enslaved to righteousness." The apostle makes an excuse for using the figure and says, "I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh." He did not know how else to describe it, for when we come from under the absolute power of sin, we come at once into a like subjection to righteousness. As we were governed and swayed by the love of sin, so we become in a similar manner subject to the forces of grace and truth. As sin took possession of us and controlled our acts, so grace claims us as its own, takes possession of us, and rules us with an absolute sway. Man passes from one master to another, but he is always in subjection. Free will I have often heard of, but I have never seen it. I have met with will and plenty of it, but it has either been led captive by sin or held in blessed bonds of grace. The passions drive it here and there like a rolling thing before a whirlwind. Or the understanding sways it and then, according as the understanding is darkened or enlightened, the will acts for good or evil. In any case, the bit is in its mouth and it is guided by a power beyond itself.

However, I leave that question and call attention this morning first of all to *our change of masters*—"Being made free from sin, we become the

servants of righteousness." Secondly, to *the reasons for that change;* and thirdly, to *the consequences of that change*.

I. We begin with our CHANGE of MASTERS. We must have a master, but some of us by divine grace have made a change of masters infinitely to our advantage. In describing this inward revolution, we will begin with a word or two upon our old master. The apostle says in the verse preceding our text, "We were the servants of sin." How true that is! Those of us who now believe and are free from sin were all without exception the servants of sin. We were not all alike enslaved, but we were all under bondage. Sin has its uniformed servants. Did you ever see a man dressed in the full uniform of sin? A fine suit, I guarantee you! Sin clothes its slave with rags, with shame, and often with disease. When fully dressed in Satan's uniform the sinner is abominable, even to his fellow sinners. If you want to see sin's uniformed servants dressed out in their best or their worst, go to the prisons and you will find them there. Or go to the dens of infamy in this great city, or to the liquor bars, or to the places of vicious amusement, and you will find them there. Many of them wear the badge of the devil's drudgery upon their backs in poverty and rags, upon their faces in the blotches born of drunkenness, and in their very bones in the consequences of their vice. Satan has regimentals for his soldiers and they are worthy of the service.

But great folks have many servants who are out of uniform and so has sin. We were not all open transgressors before our new birth, though we were all the servants of sin. There are many slaves of evil whom you would not know to be such if you only saw the surface of their characters. They do not swear, or steal, or commit adultery, or even break the Sabbath outwardly. On the contrary, they are most moral in their conduct. They are the servants of sin, but they are secretly so for fear of rebuke. They are non-professing sinners and yet sincerely in love with sin. They stood up and sung the hymn just now. They bowed their heads in prayer and they are now listening to this sermon, and no one can tell the difference between them and the servants of Christ by their exterior. But at heart, they reject the Son of God and refuse to believe in Him, for they love the pleasures of sin and the wages of unrighteousness. A kind of selfish caution restrains them from overt acts of transgression, but their heart loves not God and their desires are not towards His ways. O, my dear hearer, if you are setting up your own righteousness in your soul as an anti-Christ against God's Christ, if you are kicking against the sway of the divine Spirit, if you are secretly living in sin, if you are following out some sweet sin in secret, even though you dare to appear in the uniform of Christ, yet still you are the slave of sin. Hypocrites are worse slaves than any others because they are laid under the restraints of religious men without enjoying their consolations and they practice the sins of the ungodly without their pleasures. Every hypocrite is a fool and a coward. He has not the will to serve the Lord and yet he has not the courage to serve the devil out and out. These go-betweens are of all sorts of people the most to be pitied and the most to be blamed.

As long as we are unbelievers we are the servants of sin, but we are not all outdoor servants of sin. Sin has its domestic servants who keep quiet, as well as its soldiers who beat the drum. Many keep their sin to themselves—nobody hears of them in the street, they raise no public scandal—and yet at heart they are the faithful followers of wickedness and rebellion. Their idols are set up in secret chambers, but they are heartily loved. Their desires and aspirations are all selfish, but they try to conceal this fact even from themselves. They will not serve God, they will not bow before His Son, and yet they would shrink from declaring their rebellion. They are amiable, admirable, and excellent in their outward deportment, but they are the indoor servants of Satan for all that and their heart is full of enmity against God. Some of us confess that it was so with us. When none found fault with us we were, nevertheless, rotten in heart. We used to pray, but it was a mockery of God. We went up to God's house, but we regarded not His Word and yet in all this we prided ourselves that we were righteous.

There are, however, many believers who were once outdoor servants of Satan, sinning openly and in defiance of all law. I thank God that there are some here who are now the servants of Christ, upon whom I can look with great delight, although they were once the open, overt, zealous, diligent servants of the devil. Now they are washed, renewed, and sanctified. Glory be to God for it. Oh that the Lord would bring some more great sinners inside this house and turn them into great saints, for bold offenders make zealous lovers of Jesus when He puts away their sins. They love much because they have had much forgiven and inasmuch as they desperately sinned, so do they devoutly love. And their surrender to Christ is as entire and unreserved as their former surrender to the service of evil. In this let God be praised. Still, let us all humbly bow before the truth we are now speaking of and own with great humiliation of spirit that we were the servants of sin.

In passing on we notice, next, the expression of the apostle, "*Being then made free from sin.*" Through divine grace we have been led to trust the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal salvation and having done so we are at this moment free from sin. Come, you who trust the Savior's name and rejoice in the words before us, for they describe you. You are made free from sin—not, you *shall be*, but you *are*. In what sense is this true?

First, in the sense of condemnation. The believer is no more condemned for sin. Your sin was laid on Christ of old and He as your scapegoat took it all away. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." You are acquitted and justified through the Lord your righteousness. Clap your hands for joy! It is a mercy worth ten thousand worlds. You are made free from the damning power of sin now and forever.

Next, you are made free from the guilt of sin. As you cannot be condemned, so does the truth go further—you cannot even be accused. Your transgression is forgiven you. Your sin is covered, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." "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, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." You are delivered from sin's guilt at this moment, "made free from sin."

You are in consequence free from the punishment of sin. You shall never be cast into hell, for Jesus has suffered in your stead and the justice of God is satisfied. As a believer in Christ, for you there is no bottomless pit, for you no undying worm, for you no unquenchable fire, but guilty as you are by nature, Christ has made you so completely clean that for you is reserved the, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world."

Nor is this all. You are made free from sin as to its reigning power and this is a point in which you greatly delight. Sin once said to you, "Go," and you went. It says, "Go," now, but you do not go. Sometimes sin stands in your way when grace says, "Go," and then you would gladly run but sin opposes and hinders and yet you will not yield to its demands, for grace holds dominion. You push, you struggle, you resolve that sin shall not be lord of your life, for you are not under the law but under grace. Sin hides itself in holes and corners of your nature, skulks in the dark about the streets of Mansoul, plots and plans, if it can to get the mastery over you, but it never shall—it is cast out of the throne and the Holy Spirit sits there ruling your nature—and there He will sit until you shall be perfected in holiness and shall be caught up to dwell with Christ forever and ever.

"Made free from sin." I wish I could now leave off preaching and get into a quiet pew and sit down with you and meditate upon that thought—chewing the cud as you farmers say—and getting the juice out of this rich pasturage. "Made free from sin." Why, as I pronounce those blessed words I feel like an escaped American slave in the old slave days when he leaped upon British soil in Canada. After all his running through the woods and crossing of hills and rivers, he was free! How he leaped for joy! How he cried with delight! Even so did we exult in our liberty when at the first our Lord Jesus set us free. You who were never slaves and never felt the taskmaster's lash—you do not know the value of liberty and so in spiritual things if you have never felt the slavery of sin and have never escaped therefrom into the good land of grace where Christ has made you free indeed, you do not know the joy of the redeemed. I am free! I am free! I am free! I that was once a slave to every evil desire! I am made free by omnipotent love! I have escaped from the taskmaster's fetters and I am the Lord's free man! Let all the angels praise my redeeming Lord. Let all the spirits before the throne of God praise the Lord who has led His people out of bondage, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever.

Now, how did we become free? We have become free in three ways. First, by *purchase*, for our Savior has paid the full redemption money for us and there is not a halfpenny due for us. Blessed be His name, there is no mortgage on His inheritance. The price is all paid and we are Christ's unencumbered property forever. Here we stand at this moment free, because we are ransomed and we know that our Redeemer lives. Our body,

soul, and spirit are all bought with a price and in our complete manhood we are Christ's.

Next, we are free by *power* as well as by purchase. Just as the Israelites were the Lord's own people, but He had to bring them out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm, so has the Lord by power broken the neck of sin and brought us up from the dominion of the old Pharaoh of evil and set us free. The Spirit's power—the same power which raised Christ from the dead—ay, the same power which made the heavens and the earth, has delivered us and we are the ransomed of the Lord.

And then we are free by *privilege*. "Unto as many as believed Him, to them gave He the privilege to become the sons of God." God has declared us free. His own royal, majestic, and divine decree has bidden the prisoners go forth. The Lord Himself looses the prisoners and declares that they shall no more be held in captivity. Price and power and privilege meet together in our liberty.

How came we to be free? I will tell you another story. We are free in a strange way. According to the chapter in which we find our text, we are free because we have died. If a slave dies, his master's possession in him is ended. The tyrant can rule no longer—death has relaxed his hold. "He that is dead is free from sin." Sin comes to me and asks me why I do not obey its desires. I have a ready reply. "Ah, Master Sin, I am dead! I died some thirty years ago and I do not belong to you any more. What have you to do with me?" Whenever the Lord brings a man to die in Christ—the blessed, heavenly death unto sin—how has sin any more dominion over him? He is clear from his old master because he is dead. Our old master lives to us, but we do not live to him. He may make what suit he pleases—we will not acknowledge his right. Some of us have made a public claim of our freedom by death, for *we have been buried* and the apostle says, "Know you not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." We do not trust in the burial of baptism, for we know that there would have been no truth in it if we had not been dead first, but still it is a blessed sign to us that inasmuch as we died, we have also been buried. Whenever the devil comes to us we can each one say to him, "I am no servant of yours. I died and was buried—did you not see me laid in the liquid tomb?" Oh, it is a blessed thing when the Lord enables us to feel a clear assurance that our baptism was not a mere form, but the instructive token of a work within the soul worked by the divine Spirit which set us free from the thralldom of sin.

A third thing has happened to us—*we have risen again*. According to Paul's teaching, we have risen in the resurrection of Christ—a new life has been given to us—we are new creatures in Christ Jesus. We are not the same people that we once were. Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new. If some of you were to meet your old selves, you would not know yourselves, would you? My old self does not know

me and cannot make me out. I am dead to him as to his reigning power and buried too so that I can never be his subject, nor he ever be the king of my heart. Yet he struggles to dwell within me and seems to have as many lives as a cat. Every now and then my old self sneeringly cries to my true self, "What a fool you are." My true self answers, "No, I was a fool when you had sway, but now I have come to my right mind." Sometimes that old self whispers, "There is no reality in faith," and the new self replies, "There is no reality in the things which are seen. This world is a shadow but heaven is eternal." "Ah," says the old self, "you are a hypocrite." "No," says the new self, "I was false when I was under your power, but now I am honest and true." Yes, brethren, we are risen with Christ. With Him we died and were buried and with Him we are risen and hence we are free. What slave would remain under the dominion of a master if he could say, "I died, sir. You cannot own me now, for your ownership only extended over one life. I was buried—did you own me when I was buried? I have risen again and my new life is not yours. I am not the same man that I was and you have no rights over me." We have undergone this wondrous death and resurrection and so we can say this morning with heartfelt joy, "We are made free from sin."

We are also free from sin in our hearts—we do not love it now, but loathe the thought of it. We are free from sin as to our new nature—it cannot sin because it is born of God. We are free from sin as to God's purpose about us, for He will present us before long blameless and faultless before His presence with exceeding great joy. We do not belong to sin. We refuse to serve sin. We are made free from it by the grace of God.

Now, the third part of this change of masters is this, "*You became the servants of righteousnes*s." So we have done and we are now in the possession of righteousness and under its rule. A righteous God has made us die to sin. A righteous God has redeemed us. A new and righteous life has been infused into us and now righteousness rules and reigns in us. We do not belong to ourselves, but we yield ourselves up entirely to the Redeemer's sway through His Spirit and the more completely He rules us, the better. The text says we are enslaved to righteousness and so we wish to be. We neither wish we were so enslaved that we could not even will a wrong thing, nor wish an evil thing; we desire to give ourselves up wholly and absolutely to the divine sway so that the right and the true and the good may hold us in perpetual bonds. We abandon ourselves to the supremacy of God and we find our liberty in being entirely subjected to the will of the Most High. This is a change of masters with which I know that some of you are well-acquainted. I am afraid, however, that others of you know nothing about it. May the Lord grant that you may be made to know it before you go to sleep tonight; may you be delivered from the black tyrant and brought into the service of the Prince of Peace and that straightway.

II. Secondly, let us survey the REASONS FOR OUR CHANGE. How do we justify this change of masters? A man who makes frequent shifts is not good for much. But we changed our old master because he never had any right to us and we were illegally detained by him. Why should sin

have dominion over us? Sin did not make us. Sin does not feed us. Sin has no right to us whatever—we never owed it a moment's homage. We are not debtors to the flesh to live after the flesh. Our old master cannot summon us for desertion, for he stole our services. Besides, our old master was as bad as bad could be. You never saw his portrait, but he that would paint a picture of sin would have to put upon the canvas all the monstrosities that ever existed and all the horrors that were ever imagined and these would have to be exaggerated and condensed into one before they could fairly depict the deformity of sin. Sin is worse than the devil, for sin made the devil a devil—he would have been an angel if it had not been for sin. Oh, who would serve the destroying tyrant who of old cast down even the stars of light and turned angels into fiends? We ran away from our old master because we had never any profit at his hands. The apostle says, "What fruit had he then?" Ask the drunkard, "What did you get by the drink?" Who has woe? Who has redness of the eyes? Ask the spendthrift what he gained by his debauchery. He would hardly like to tell you and I certainly should not like to repeat his tale. Ask any man that lives in sin what he has gained by it and you will find it is all loss. Sin is evil and only evil and that continually. We have found that out and therefore we have quit the old master and taken up with the new. Beside that, our old master, sin, brought us shame. There was no honor in serving him. His work is called by Paul, "those things whereof you are now ashamed." We are in the sight of God, ay, and in our own sight, ready to blush scarlet at the very thought of the evil in which we once took delight. Sin is a groveling, mean, despicable thing, and we are ashamed of having been connected with it. Moreover, its wages are death and this is dreadful to think upon. Sin at one time was pleasant to us, but when we found out that sin led its servants down to hell and plunged them into unquenchable fire, we renounced its rule and found another lord.

But why did we take up with our new Master? We could not help it for it was He that set us free. It was He that bought us. It was He that fought for us. It was He that brought us into liberty. Ah, if you could only see Him, you would not ask us why we became His servants. In the first place, we owe ourselves wholly to Him. And in the next place, if we did not, He is so altogether lovely, so matchless and so charming, that if we had a free choice of masters we would choose Him a thousand times over, for He is the crown and glory of mankind. Among the sons, there is none to be compared to Him.

If you want us to justify our service of Him, we tell you that service is perfect freedom and supreme delight. We have had to suffer a little sometimes when His enemy and ours has barked at us and the ungodly have called us ill names—but we count it honor to suffer for Jesus' sake, for He is so sweet and so good, that if we had a thousand lives and could give each one away by a martyr's death, we count Him worthy of those lives, so sweet is He to our hearts' love. Why have we taken our new Master? Why, because He gives us even now a present payment in His service. If there were no hereafter, we would be satisfied with the present

delight He gives us, but in addition to that He has promised us as a future reward eternal life at His right hand. We think, therefore, that we have more than sufficient reason for becoming the servants of Jesus Christ who is made of God unto us righteousness. Dear hearers, how I wish that you would all enter my Lord's service by faith in His name.

III. In the third place and very practically, I want to talk to those who are servants of God upon THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS CHANGE. You have become the servants of righteousness and the first consequence is that you belong wholly to your Lord. Have you recognized this? I know numbers of Christian people—I hope they are Christian people, for in some points they seem as if they were—but if I were asked to look at their lives and give an opinion as to whom they belong, I should be compelled to say, "They seem mostly to belong to themselves." To whom does their property belong? "To themselves." To whom does their time belong? "To themselves." To whom does their talent belong? "To themselves." As far as I can see, they lay all out upon themselves and live for themselves. And what do they give to God? If they are rather generous, they give Him the candle ends and the parings of the cheese and little odds and ends—three penny-bits and things they do not want and can give without missing them. There are hundreds of professors who never gave God anything that cost them a self-denial—no, not so much as going without a dish on the table or a picture on the wall or a ring on the finger. There are numbers of professing Christians who spend a deal more on the soles of their boots than on Christ and many women who spend more on the feathers and the flowers which deck their bonnets than on their Savior. Yes, and I have heard of men who said they were perfect and yet they were worth half a million of money and were hoarding up more! Sinners dying and being damned and missionaries without support—and yet these absolutely perfect men are piling up gold and letting the cause of Christ stop for means. It is not my theory of perfection, nay, it does not seem to me to come up to the idea of a common Christian who says he is not his own. If you are really saved, brethren, not a hair of your heads belongs to yourselves. Christ's blood has either bought you or it has not, and if it has, then you are altogether Christ's, every bit of you—you are neither to eat nor drink, nor sleep but for Christ, "Whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God." Have you ever got a hold of that? Just as a Negro used to belong to the man that bought him, every inch of him, so you are the slave of Christ. You bear in your body the brand of Lord Jesus and your glory and your freedom are therein. That is the first consequence of being set free from sin—you became the servants of righteousness.

What next? Why, because you are Christ's, His very name is dear to you. You are not so His slave that you would escape from His service if you could—no, but you would plunge deeper and deeper into it. You want to be more and more the Lord's. His very name is sweet to you. If you meet with the poorest person who belongs to Christ, you love him and though perhaps some who are like Christ in other respects may have awkward tempers, you put up with their infirmities for His sake. Where there is anything of Christ—there your love goes forth. I remember when

I left the village where I first preached, I felt that if I had met a dog that came from Waterbeach, I should have petted him—and such is the love we have for Christ—that the lowest and weakest thing that belongs to Him we love for His sake. The very sound of His name is music to us and those who do not love Him, we cannot endure. Haydn, the great musician, one day walked down a London street and turning into a music-seller's shop, he asked the salesman if he had any select and beautiful music. "Well, sir," said he, "I have some sublime music by Mr. Haydn." "Oh," said Haydn, "I'll have nothing to do with that." "Why, sir, you come to buy music and will have nothing to do with Mr. Haydn's composition! What fault can you find with it?" "I can find a great deal of fault with it, but I will not argue with you: I do not want any of his music." "Then," said the shopkeeper, "I have other music, but it is not for such as you," and he turned his back on him. A thorough enthusiast grows impatient with those who do not appreciate what he so much admires. If we love Jesus we shall sometimes feel an impatient desire to get away from those who know Him not. You do not love Christ? What kind of man can you be to be so blind, so dead? You can be no friend of mine if you are not a friend of Christ's. I would do anything for your good, but you cannot yield me delight or be my bosom friend unless you love my Lord, for He has engrossed my heart and taken entire possession of my spirit. If you have thus become a servant of righteousness, you will weary of that which does not help you in His service but the name of your Master will be as the choicest music to you.

And now, dear friends, let me mention another result. All your members are henceforth reserved for Christ. What does the apostle say? "When you were the servants of sin you were free from righteousness." When Satan was your master you did not care about Christ, did you? You had no respect for Him and if anybody before you said, "Take them away—I do not want to hear them." You wholly were in agreement for evil. Now, in the same way yield yourself up wholly to Christ, and say, "Now, Satan, when I was yours I did not yield obedience to Jesus and now that I am Christ's, I can yield no obedience to you." If Satan brings sin before you say, "I cannot see it—my eyes are Christ's." And if he would charm you with the sweet sound of temptation say, "I cannot hear it—my ears are Christ's." "Oh," says Satan, "seize on this delight." You answer, "I cannot reach it—my hands are Christ's." "But taste this sweet draught," says he. You say, "I cannot take it—my lips are Christ's, my mouth is Christ's, all my members are Christ's." "Well, but you can form a judgment, can't you, about this error?" "My understanding is Christ's." "Oh, but listen to this new thing." "No, I do not want to hear. I have found Christ who is new enough for me. I do not want your novel discoveries. I am dead to them. I do not want to be worried with arguments which dishonor my Lord—take them away. When I was a servant of sin, I would not meddle with the truth, and now that I am a servant of Christ, I will not trifle in the opposite direction. I have done with all but Jesus."

Think, my brethren, when we were servants of sin, in what way did we serve it? For just as we used to serve sin, so ought we to work for Jesus.

I do not speak to all here present, but I speak to many who were sinners of an open kind. How did you serve sin? I will answer for them. They did not require to be egged on to it. They did not need any messenger of the devil to plead with them and urge them to unholy pleasures and unclean delights. Far from it! Some even of their own companions thought them too imprudent. Now, dear friends, you ought not to want your ministers or Christian friends to stir you up to good works. You ought to be just as eager after holiness as you were after sin. Evil was very sweet to you once. You used to watch for the day when you could indulge in a sweet sin, did you not? When the time was coming round when you could take a deep draught of iniquity, you took the almanac and looked for it as a child for his holidays. Brother, sister, serve Christ in the same way. May His Holy Spirit help you to do so. Watch for opportunities of doing good. Do not need whipping to do your duty. Instead of requiring to be urged forward in evil, we needed homing back, didn't we? Our parents had to put the rein upon us! Sometimes mother would say, "John, do not so," and Father would cry, "My boy, do not do this." We wanted a great deal of restraint. I wish I had a band of Christians round me who needed holding back in the service of Christ. I have not met with that sort yet. I am prepared with any kind of curb when I meet with a high-mettled Christian, who goes at too great a rate in His Lord's service. For the most part my Master's horses are fonder of getting into the stables than out into the hunting field. I have not met with one who has done too much for the Lord. I shall never be guilty of too much work myself. I wish I could go like the wind in serving Jesus.

Brethren, be just as hot to honor Christ as you once were to dishonor Him. As you have given the devil first-rate service, let Christ have the same. You recollect in the days of your sin, some of you who went in for it thoroughly that you never stopped at any expense—did you? Oh no, if you wanted pleasure in sin, away went the five pounds and the hundreds. How often do I meet with men, particularly those given to drink, who get pounds in their pockets and never know where they go—but they will never leave off till all is spent—be it little or much. Poor fools, poor fools! Yet I wish we could serve Jesus Christ thus unstintedly. No expense should be reckoned so long as we can honor Him and bless His name. Bring forth the alabaster box. Break it—never mind the chips and pieces—pour out the oil and let Jesus have it all. It was thus I served Satan and thus would I serve Christ.

Ay, and the poor slaves of sin not only do not stop at expense, but they are not frightened by any kind of loss. Look at how many lose their characters for the sake of one short hour of sin. How many are wringing their hands now, because none will trust them and they are cut off from decent society because of one short-lived sin. They ruin their peace and think nothing of it. A quiet conscience is the brightest of jewels but they fling it away to enjoy their sin. They will lose their health too for the sake of indulging their passions. The devil says, "Drink, drink. Drink yourselves blind." And they do it as eagerly as if it were for their good. They are martyrs for Satan. Never did a Zulu fling himself upon death for his

king so recklessly as these servants of Satan yield themselves for his service. They will do anything. They will destroy their health and what is worst of all, destroy their souls forever, for the sake of sin's brief delights. They know that there is a hell. They know that the wrath of God abides forever on guilty men, but they risk all and lose all for sin. In that same way should we serve our Lord. Be willing to lose our character for Him. Be willing to lose health for Him. Be willing to lose life for Him. Be willing to lose all, if by any means you may glorify Him whose servant you have become.

Oh, who will be my Master's servant? Here He comes! Do you not see Him? He wears upon His head no diadem but a crown of thorns. Running down His cheeks you see the spittle flowing. His feet are still rubied with their wounds and His hands are still bejeweled with the marks of the nails. This is your Master and these are the insignia of His love for you. What service will you render Him? That of a mere professor who names His name, but loves Him not? That of a cold religionist who renders unwilling service out of fear? I pray you, brethren, do not so dishonor Him. I lift the standard this morning to enlist beneath the banner of Christ those who will henceforth be Christ's men and women from head to foot, and happy shall the church be, and happy the entire Israel of God if a chosen number shall enlist and remain true to their colors. We need no more nominal Christians—your lukewarm Christians, whom my Master spues out of His mouth. We need men and women on fire with love— all over consecrated, intensely devoted—who, by the slavery from which they have escaped and by the liberty into which they have entered, are under bond to spend and be spent for the name of Jesus till they have filled the earth with His glory and made all heaven ring with His praise. The Lord bless you, beloved, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans 6.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
116 (SONG II), 658, 119 (SONG III).

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THE PRESENT CRISIS
NO. 1483

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 13, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early."
Hosea 5:15.

THE Lord does not always tell us what He will do. "Verily You are a God that hides Yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior." He has told us that, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing" and our Lord Jesus has said, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own power." When He does make known to us what He is about to do, it is not to gratify our curiosity but to direct our conduct. In this case the Lord speaks aloud concerning His intentions. He had grown weary with chastening His people and therefore He was about to withdraw Himself from them and leave them alone, as a man leaves a hopeless work or as a judge leaves the bench and gives over the prisoner to condemnation. He says, "I will go and return to My place," as if His waiting time was over and He would no longer remain in their midst to be provoked by their obstinacy. This withdrawal would occasion the non-acceptance of their prayers and offerings, even as He had said in a former verse, "They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord; but they shall not find Him; He has withdrawn Himself from them." This He tells them in order that they may be led to implore Him to remain with them. Or that if He is already gone, they may by hearty confession of their sin and an immediate seeking of His face, prevail upon Him once more to visit them in His grace. If God is about to go, then all is going, even hope itself is removing. The divine departure is the worst of calamities and therefore it is but right that those who are threatened with such a judgment should put their thoughts together, consider their ways and use the best means to hold Him by the skirts before He has departed or to bring Him back again before He has effectually closed the door between Him and them. There should be an eager desire to bring the King back so that once more the heart may sun itself in the light of His favor. Dear friends, I shall speak this morning with the most anxious desire to be practical, longing and praying in my heart that wherever sin has begun to separate between us and God, we may be stirred up to acknowledge our offenses and to seek His face and that where such a separation has long existed, there may arise an intense desire of the whole soul to return from its banishment and draw near to God.

We shall this morning use our text first in reference to *our national troubles*, for the words were originally spoken with regard to the national troubles of Israel and Judah. Secondly, we shall use it in reference to *our personal trials as believers.* And then, thirdly, in its relation to *the per-*

sonal trials of the unconverted. Lessons may here be learned instructive in each of the three cases. May the Holy Spirit speak the truth home to the heart.

I. And first, with regard to OUR PRESENT NATIONAL TROUBLES. I desire to speak of these things as before God in all sincerity and simplicity. I know it is impossible to touch upon such a subject without being suspected of political bias, but I can truly declare that from all such partiality I desire to be freed so that I may not speak as a partisan, but as the servant of the living God. Calmly and solemnly would I speak words of soberness and truth and justice; it is a burden to my heart to speak a hard word of my own beloved country, and if I seem to do so it is not in wantonness, but because of a pressure upon my conscience which will not let me be silent.

Surely no one will deny that our country is passing through a season of great and grievous adversity. We have been perplexed for many months and even for years with perpetual rumors of wars. For a long time, no man knew, when he went to bed at night, but what the journal of the morning would inform him that our nation had plunged into war with at least one of the great powers of Europe. Our policy has been such, whether wise or unwise, that we have been constantly on the verge of conflict. It is wonderful that we have escaped from embroiling ourselves in long and serious war, for many a time the flames of contention have threatened a general conflagration. This disquietude of itself has been a serious injury to the prosperity of our country, for trade and commerce make prosperous voyages upon the waters of peace—but even before those waters are disturbed by the storms of actual war—while only the threat of battle ruffles the surface, they make small headway or are driven back. Commerce is timid as a dove and is fluttered by every turmoil or whisper of coming trouble. In a thousand ways political agitations stab at the heart of national prosperity.

In addition to this we have been actually engaged in two wars at least—wars certainly expensive and questionably expedient. In these two conflicts it is impossible for us to gain honor since they were cases of the mighty assailing the feeble. Laurels gained from nations so far inferior to us would have been unworthy of a place upon the brow of a brave nation. We have invaded one country and then another with no better justification than the law of superior force or the suspicion of future danger. Disaster has followed upon the heels of disaster and at the end of it all, there are great expenses to be met. Our acts of aggression must be paid for not only with the blood of our soldiers, but with the sinew and sweat of our working men. Results of industry which ought to have gone to support the arts and promote the comfort and advancement of the race have been thrown away in wasteful feats of arms. The food which should have fed our children has been flung into the mouth of the lion, to be devoured by war, that its evil spirit may become yet more ravenous. Willful waste, it is to be feared, will be followed by woeful want unless God in His mercy shall interpose. We have meddled in many things and have threatened at least three of the great quarters of the globe either with our fleets or our armies. Nothing could content us till we had drawn the sword against a brave though savage people, whose fighting may well be

fierce, since it is for their invaded fatherland. These wars, whatever their issue, are serious calamities.

On the back of all this war has come depression in trade. Everywhere there is complaining and not without cause. Even the most cheerful of men who have always been rejoicing when others have lamented have begun at last to look very serious and to admit that the times are threatening. Striving tradesmen wonder whether they shall be able to "provide things honest in the sight of all men." Many a man now plans and labors, but his care and toil earn but a scant reward. All trade is dull and some trade is dead. Some branches of industry are already paralyzed and there is but little prospect of their ever being revived. The land mourns and men's hearts sink for fear. Matters are not so bad as despondency would paint them, but even hope is unable to draw a cheerful picture. It is a day of darkness and of gloominess—a day of clouds and of thick darkness.

As if all this were not enough, the heavens refuse to assist the processes of farmers. For the most part, the hay crop, so necessary for the cattle, may be regarded as lost and now great peril is upon the corn. In some places the corn is too backward to have suffered much at present, but in others the prospects are dark indeed. It seems certain that a continuance of this constant rain must deprive us of the most precious fruits of the earth. Farmers are beginning to cry out bitterly and there is a demand that prayer should be offered in all the churches for fair weather. May God be pleased to look upon our land and deliver us in this hour of trouble, for indeed it is a time of loss and ruin to thousands! If ever prayer was needed, it is surely at this hour. You who live in London do not know much about what is happening to the crops and what the eye does not see, the heart does not rue—but to our agricultural friends this ill weather is a matter of most serious consideration—they are suffering very heavily. NO one can doubt that the badness of trade affects the farmer in common with the rest of the community—and now comes the further burden of sunless skies, winter in summer, and the clouds returning after the rain.

In the first matter, that of a warlike policy, we may by God's goodness make a change. It may be possible that before long better principles will come to the front and we may no longer be made to appear as a nation of snarlers and growlers, breathing defiance and delighting in war. God grant it speedily! But as to the two other matters, what can we do? We are powerless to quicken trade. We are certainly powerless to stay the bottles of heaven. If God wills it, the clouds will gather from day to day and drench our fields with their pitiless downpour. Deluge will follow deluge till the corn shall rot in the fields if God so determines. Prayer is therefore desired and well it may be. But by some, prayer is desired as if it were quite certain that if certain pious words are repeated the rain must necessarily cease and the weather become favorable. I am not quite so sure. Let prayer be offered by all means, but only under certain conditions can it prove effectual. I know of many reasons why it may be possible that such prayers as are likely to be offered will not be heard, but instead the threatened judgment of God may, nevertheless, come upon us. I desire this morning to speak about prayer in the way of warning, lest

men should place an unwise confidence in the formality of reading a form of prayer in churches or uttering extempore formalities in meeting houses. Few men believe more thoroughly in the power of real prayer than I do and I have tested and proved it in many remarkable ways so fully that I have no doubts as to its efficacy, but heartily magnify the name of our prayer-hearing God. But we must still use our understandings, lest we be deceived and come to expect what we shall not receive. I would call to your recollection the fact that under certain circumstances, God does not answer prayer. Our text says, "I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offense," and if this is the case, there will be no answering of prayer till repentance is manifested. Sometimes the heavens are brass, even to good men, and their cries reverberate and come back into their own ears, not without a blessing to themselves, but still without any visible reply as to the people for whom their intercessions were offered. It is not every sort of prayer that God will hear, for He says by His servant Isaiah, "When you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: *your hands are full of blood"* (Isa 1:15). Intercession is sometimes useless, for Jeremiah tells us, "Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be toward this people" (Jer 15:1). Ezekiel also warns us that the presence of the godly may not at all times avert judgment, for thus says the Lord, "Son of man, when the land sins against Me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out My hand upon it and will break the staff of the bread thereof and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, says the Lord God" (Eze 14:13-14). David, doubtless, prayed earnestly that he might escape from the chastisement of his sin when he numbered the people, but it could not be removed. He had a choice of three evils, but one of the three was inevitable. When God has come to this point with a people, that He must and will smite them, prayer is their only resource and even that may fail to avert the threatened stroke. A child may have so transgressed that his father may feel bound to punish him and then he will not spare the rod because of his crying. I pray God that the rain may cease, but if it should be continued, it will not be because the Lord cannot help us or has ceased to answer prayer. Here is the secret of it all and with trembling do I quote the words—"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear. *For your hands are defiled with blood"* (Isa 59:1-8). Remember, too, that not only may God withdraw Himself in anger, but it may be His determination to punish a people out of a far-seeing design for their good. Perhaps, as a nation, we have had too much prosperity. Ease and plenty have begotten pride and luxury and these may have weakened the spirit of the nation. It may have become absolutely necessary for this favored nation, if it is to still be the stronghold of liberty and the fortress of gospel truth, that it should again endure those northern blasts of adversity which have aforetime strengthened it at heart. It will not be the first time that our land has suffered for

her good. Bad harvests and decaying trade are not new things to Englishmen. There linger among us now a few venerable men and women who can tell us of the straits of the old war time—of how there was great scantiness of bread and heaviness of taxation and frequent alarms from abroad and riots at home. What a long and dreary time it was when the sound of cannon might almost be heard across the straits and watch fires were ready on every cliff and height! Yet good came of the affliction and since that gloomy time the country has made rapid progress in many respects and especially in freedom, civil and religious—may it be so again. I would not wish ill to my country, but if our fellow men will not remember God except in adversity, adversity itself might be desired by the kindest heart. If true religion is to be cast into the dust by boastful infidelity, if a bastard popery is to be allowed to occupy our national churches, if drunkenness is to remain shameless and almost universal, if the language of the common people is to become filthy and obscene, if the exaltation of one favored sect above its fellow Christians—a crying deed of injustice—is perpetually to endure, if our nation is to shed the blood of weaker nations and send its armies into lands which are none of ours, then it will not be a strange thing if the Lord resolves to punish—and it will be hard for the righteous man to find an argument with which to plead for pity. When the offense is repented of, the punishment will be withdrawn—but can we expect pardon on other terms? Can we even ask for it? The verdict of the sternly just would rather be, "Let the rod fall," than, "Let it be withdrawn," if only by severe means the nation can be made to put away its evil deeds. In our text, God declares that He will not give audience to His erring people, but will retire into His secret place until they acknowledge the offense and seek His face. It may be so with our nation at this time and if it is, we need to be exhorted to something more than public prayer. There is need of a work more thorough and more difficult than the public use of a devotional form.

But, says one, "We hope we shall have national prayer." I hope so, too, but will there be a national confession of sin? If not—how can mere prayer avail? Will there be a general desire to do that which is just and right between man and man? Will there be a declaration that England's policy is never to trample on the weak or pick a quarrel for her own aggrandizement? Will there be a loathing of the principle that British interests are to be our guiding star instead of justice and right? Personal interests are no excuse for doing wrong. If they were so, we should have to exonerate the worst of thieves, for they will not invade a house until their personal interests invite them. Perhaps the midnight robber may yet learn to plead that he only committed a burglary for fear another thief should take the spoil and make worse use of it than he. Does the highwayman stop a passenger on the road for any other than his own interests? When our own interests are our policy, nobility is dead and true honor is departed—but I fear that only a minority are of this mind. Will the nation repent of any one of its sins? Will it settle itself down like the people of Jerusalem during the great rain of Ezra's time and do that which is right in the sight of God? Remember what they said in that day, "The people are many and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither is this a work of one day or two: for we are many that

have transgressed in this thing." If stern reformation went with supplication, I am persuaded that prayer would prevail, but while sin is gloried in, my hopes find little ground to rest upon.

But will there be general prayer? No, there will not. I speak sadly, but I speak no more than the truth. There are numbers among us who say that prayer is of no use with regard to the winds and the clouds, for certain laws govern the weather and prayer cannot affect those laws. These men, therefore, will not pray and there are multitudes of others of like spirit whose atheism is practical though it is unavowed. How, then, can prayer be general when such vast numbers utterly disregard it? Turn your eyes to Nineveh. When Jonah threatened that great city and upon its repentance the judgment was withdrawn, of what character was its humiliation? From the king on the throne even to the beasts in the field—all were clothed with sackcloth and fasted and cried out to God—and therefore we marvel not that He heard them. Will there be any such crying to God among us? I think not. A defiant silence will seal millions of lips. But what of those who are supposed to pray? Are all these men of the Elijah stamp, whose fervent prayer could open or shut the windows of heaven? We dare not put much confidence in the prayers which will be offered. Will they be offered in faith by a tenth of those who will repeat them? I wish I could hope so. By many, the public prayer will be regarded as absolutely ridiculous—and by many more as a mere matter of form which it is proper to use—but in which no confidence whatever can be placed. Do not, therefore, say, if the rain should continue by the month together, that prayer was ordered by the Archbishop of Canterbury and that God did not hear it and therefore all prayer is idle. No, but see what kind of prayer it will be and how little connected it will be with confession—and how little it will be general and how little it will be sincere—and then you will not wonder if no comfortable answer comes of it. It may be that my text will be the sole answer of the Lord, "I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early."

What, then, is to be done? This much is to be done—all hope for a country lies in the true believers who dwell there. Remember Sodom and how it would have been spared had there been ten righteous men found therein and know that you also are the salt of the earth by whom it is to be conserved. Loathe the spirit of those who say that, because we are citizens of heaven we are to have nothing to do with the concerns of men below. A more un-Christianlike sentiment, a more selfish sentiment never degraded spiritual minds. Wherever the Jews dwelt, in the days of their scattering, they were commanded to care for the good of the people among whom they dwelt. Here are the words of the Lord by Jeremiah—"Seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall you have peace." Surely Christians are not to be less generous than Jews. Happily, we are not under a despot. In England we are our own governors and the man who in this land does nothing to secure the good government of the country is, by his silence, on the side of wrong. You cannot shirk your responsibility except by clearing out of the land altogether—and then if it suffers by your absence, you will still be found guilty.

You are part and parcel of the nation, for you share in its protection and privileges and it is yours as Christian men and women to feel that you are bound in return to do all you can in the midst of it to promote truth and righteousness. What then? What course should we now pursue? Let us make confession of sin on behalf of the people as Moses and Jeremiah and Daniel did aforetime. You may not consider that to be sin which I judge to be so, but, my brethren, you see sin enough all around you of one sort or another. Take it to yourself and as the high priest went in to the holy place to plead for the people, so you act as a priest before God in your quiet personal devotions. Confess the sin of this nation before God. If it will not repent, repent for it. Stand as a sort of consecrated sponsor before God and let the sin be on your heart till you fall on your face before the Most High. Remember, the saints are intercessors with God for the people. You are God's remembrancers and as you are called to make mention of His name, keep not silence day nor night, but in this hour of trouble pour out your hearts before Him. Get up to your Carmels and cry aloud, you that know how to cry unto God, that He may send deliverance, and when you have prayed for this people and asked the Lord to forgive its sin and also to take away the chastising rod, then all of you promote by your daily lives, your precepts and your actions, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report." Be on the side of temperance and sobriety—be on the side of peace and of justice—be on the side of everything that is according to the mind of God and according to the law of love. Love God and your fellow men and seek to promote all interests which look that way. I believe that a country can never have a larger blessing, a truer safeguard for the present, or a firmer security for its future greatness than a band of praying men and women who make mention of it before the throne of God. English history, from the first day till now, is as full of instruction as the history of Israel from Egypt even to Babylon. Did you ever read Cowper's wonderful description of the care which God has taken of this little island? How He has favored and protected it? When all the nations were in arms against it, they could not touch its shore, for God was there. And on the other hand, the Lord has laid us low and made us suffer when we have boasted of our fleets and armies. Our nation has been as much under the peculiar and especial providence of God as were the descendants of Jacob themselves and therefore God deals with us as He does not deal with other nations. The smothering of black men with smoke in the caves to which they had fled, the burning down of human habitations, and the hunting of men as if they were wild beasts is greater iniquity with us than it would have been in savages or even in Papists or Mohammedans. Our religion is higher, nobler, purer than theirs and we ought to be ashamed to act as they do. Bloodshed by some nations God winks at, for they know but little better—but a country which has in it the very sun of the gospel shining in the fullness of its strength should set to the world an example which it can follow and if it does not, it may expect to have trouble after trouble and blow after blow from the hand of God.

Thus have I spoken what was burdening my heart. Make what you will of it—it is the warning of an honest lover of his country who fears the Lord and fears none besides. Judge me to have spoken with political bias or not and censure me as you choose. I could say no less or I would gladly have held my peace. Before God I am clear in this thing of any attempt but an upright one. May God grant that my feeble protest may touch the hearts of those who ought to feel its truth. I am not very confident that it will be so, for we have fallen upon evil times and the heart of the people has waxen gross.

II. And now, secondly, let us view the text in reference to our PERSONAL TRIALS AS BELIEVERS. Brethren and sisters, let us now commune with one another concerning the ways of God with our own souls. The Lord will not cast off His people—notwithstanding their faults, they are His own children and they shall be His children forever. But when His children sin, God is sure to chasten them for it. "You only have I known of all the people, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities." He leaves His enemies alone for a while, but He smites His sons. His foes shall go unpunished till the end shall be—but as for His beloved, He is exceedingly jealous over them and He will make them smart when they sin. Has the Lord been chastening any of us of late? Has the moth been in our estates or has the lion been tearing our peace? Let us turn at His rebuke. Let us say unto the Lord, "Show me why You contend with me. Lord, if You are smiting me, I would not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, but I would turn unto You at once, before You smite me again." It is good to repent at once and seek our heavenly Father's face.

For, note next, when chastisements are of no avail, withdrawment follows. The Lord has promised that He will not forsake His people, nor will He utterly do so, but there are withdrawments which are not included in that promise. God may so hide Himself from His servants that they may have no conscious fellowship with Him, no enjoyment of His Word, no power in prayer. In fact, they may pray and He may shut out their prayer. Their life may be sapless and spiritless—joy and peace may flee. They may possibly try at such times to make up for their loss by enjoying the world. They may run after carnal pleasures and vain amusements, but they cannot fill their minds with them—they have no joy with such empty vanities—grace has made them incapable of finding soul food in the corn and wine of earth. They must have their God or die. Let me tell you most solemnly that it is a very sad thing when God has withdrawn from a believing spirit and the more holy a man has been, the more sadly will he lament that he is now under a cloud and the more earnestly will he cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat."

When these withdrawments of God are painfully felt, then we should begin most eagerly to search out the sin which has caused them, for sin is at the bottom of it all. If, believer, there is a quarrel between your Beloved and yourself, is there not a cause? Our Lord Jesus is no fitful lover who in a moment will leave the soul which is espoused to Him merely to indulge a whim. Far otherwise. He never trifles with us, but treats our love as a sacred thing. There is some grave cause whenever the Beloved

frowns. Now for a thorough search, a sweeping of the house, and a cleansing out of all things that offend. Throughout the heart, the understanding, and the lips let a search warrant be issued and if any sin is detected—and it will not be long before it will be—let it be brought to light and judged. Set it in the light of God's countenance and there confess it and lament it. Offer no apologies and excuses and explanations, but honestly confess the wrong and leave it. Have you restrained prayer? Confess it. Have you neglected the reading of the Word? Confess it. Have you been neglectful of your children and your family as to training them in the nurture of the Lord? Confess it. Has there been laxity in your contact with the world? Have you given way to flippancy and levity? Have you been proud? Have you been slothful? Have you indulged too much in the pleasures of the table? Has your heart set itself upon your wealth? Then bring the idols out and let your heart see the wounds which they have given you and what it is that you have doted on and what these things are which have come between you and your God. Surely you will be ashamed of them when you consider that their love is the price for which you have parted with your Savior's presence. Is this a goodly price that your Lord was prized at by you? Judas' pieces of silver were not more contemptible than these poor paltry bribes. Lament the treachery of your heart and hear Him ask you, "Do you love Me?" nor hesitate to answer, "Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You."

But, beloved, when you have obtained a sense of the sin or sins which separate you from God and have made a full confession, then take care that you seek the Lord with hopefulness and confidence, for notwithstanding all this, you are His child still and must not give way to a paralyzing despair. You are married unto Christ and there is no divorce with Him, "for the Lord, the God of Israel, says He hates putting away." He will not cast off forever, nor put away His erring spouse. Come, therefore, unto Him with humble confidence. He has torn and He will heal. He has struck and He will bind us up. Seek His face, for His face is towards you. The very face of God is Jesus Christ. The Son of God is He in whom we see the Father. Even as you see a man in his countenance, so God is seen in Christ. Seek God in Christ Jesus, for thereby good shall come unto you. Do not say, "It is of no use, I have backslidden and revolted again and again and He will now refuse me finally." No, He will not reject you. You are not out of reach of His love—He will turn again and have compassion on you, for He delights in mercy. If He withdraws, it is only that you may sigh after Him and seek after Him. A nurse, when her little child will go away from her and fall into danger, will sometimes hide herself from it to teach it better. She still sees the child, though the little one cannot see her. She is near to help, but the child cannot find her and so it begins to cry for her and does not rest till she is found. The child will not so soon wander again. Even so may the Lord hide His face to make us cry after Him, but He is very near us all the while and He will yet be found of us. "Behold," says He, "I stand at the door and knock. If any man open to me I will enter in." It is not much, is it, to open the door? That is all He asks. Open and let Him in, for He adds, "and I will sup with him." "Ah, Lord," say to Him, "we have no provision fit for You." But know assuredly He brings His supper with Him and we sup with Him

and He with us. He only wants you to lend the house, by opening your heart, for He has brought the food. Yes, He is Himself our bread from heaven. Now, to whom is this spoken? To sinners? No, no, it is spoken to the church of Laodicea, which was "neither cold nor hot." Her Lord was ready to spew her out of His mouth and yet in mercy He cries, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." O backslider, Jesus waits to be gracious to you. He longs to restore you. Only acknowledge your transgression and return to Him. Be of good cheer as to acceptance, for He casts out none who come to Him. End these backslidings and there need be no more misery. God help you to rise this very day into a closer walk with Him and may He keep you by His side forever.

To be out of fellowship with God is for the heart to be in a state of spiritual disease. Things must be wrong within when we are wrong with God. When we do not walk in the light, as God is in the light, there is some evil in the eye of the soul. Dread the evil and cry for healing. To be away from God is to be in a state of spiritual weakness. Samson may shake himself as at other times, but he can do no deeds of strength when the Lord has departed from him. God is our strength and God's hiding makes us weak as water. If the Lord should leave us, we cannot plead with Him and prevail, nor can we plead with men and win them for Christ. Our strength has departed—both towards God and towards man—when our fellowship with God is suspended. Our heart cannot leap like a young roe upon the mountains—our spirit limps as one whose bones are broken. We cannot even gaze through the gates of pearl to see the glory which the Spirit reveals, for our eye is dim so that we cannot see afar off when Jesus is away. If you are in this condition, you are in an evil case—burdensome care invades you, anxieties annoy you, your temper gets the mastery, Satan accuses, and conscience trembles. Your spirit is like that of a carnal man and you are apt to speak unadvisedly with your lips and to be readily moved by every external influence. What is worse, when a man is out of fellowship with God, he is in danger of presumptuous sins. David, on the terraces of his palace, had not been walking with God or else the sight of Bathsheba below had not caused him so grievous a fall. Lose communion with Christ and you are on the verge of a folly which will stain your character and terribly mar your life. It is only when we are near to God that we are safe—therefore, let a sense of danger drive us to Him at once. I speak from a widespread observation as well as from an inward experience. There is but a step between distance from God and the nearness of temptation and sin.

If God thinks much of you, He will have you near Him or else He will make you miserable. He will not permit you to rejoice except in Himself. If your love is not worth His having, you may love whom you like, but when He loves you much, He will be very jealous over you and if He finds you are content to be without His company, He will make you suffer for such wantonness and ingratitude. That by-path meadow business—that going down the green lane to get off the flints of the right road, that getting away from Christ to have a taste of the world's sweet delusions, that coming down from our high places as if we had grown weary of being happy and were discontented with an angelic life—all that means a succession of afflictions and regrets which can only at the very best end in

our getting to Christ again with broken bones. Such wanderings are painful, end how they may. David's career before his sin—how different it was from his life afterwards. You can always tell which psalms he wrote before his transgression—they are so jubilant, so full of holy rejoicing, but afterwards when he sings, it is in a bass voice. He sweeps his harp, but the strings are disordered. He loves his God, but it is the solemn, tearful love of repentance rather than the bright sparkling love of delight in God. Do not err, my beloved brethren, for error brings sorrow. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." If you have gone aside to evil, then seek early the face of God and He will be found of you in Christ Jesus.

III. And now my time is almost spent, indeed I have but a few minutes to use on the third head and I would, therefore, speak few words, but speak them very earnestly indeed. We shall now think of THE PERSONAL TRIALS OF THE SINNER. Oh, you that are unconverted, if God means to save you, He will before long begin by chastening you in body or in mind. You will have trouble. You are a wandering sheep and God will send His black dog after you to fetch you to the fold. If one trouble does not do it, you will have another and another and another. Perhaps I speak to some who, as the result of providential chastenings and the work of conscience on their spirit, have already been awakened—let them take heed of trifling with their awakenings. After that earnest sermon, or after reading that stirring book, you began to pray, but your desires and feelings have now subsided. I would have you greatly grieve over this. Let me warn you that God may withdraw Himself from you altogether. Some have been sitting in this Tabernacle now for years, from whom I fear God has withdrawn Himself, for you used to feel much moved by the gospel, but it is not so now. You would not come when you were called and admonished, but you revolted more and more—and now His mercy is growing weary of you. You were smitten again and again, but you still rebelled and now God says, "Let him alone." This is a more terrible calamity than you suspect—unless it is averted, it will be your ruin.

I may be speaking to some strangers here who at one time had a disturbed conscience, but they have grown very callous of late. You are in danger of eternal wrath, but you are wonderfully easy. You can even make jokes about religion, can't you? Poor souls! I fear the Lord has given you over for a time at least—I hope not forever. Do you ask me what you should do? I reply that according to our text it is high time for you to seek the Lord. You were smitten before you tried self-righteousness, church-going, chapel-going, sacraments, and so forth. As the prophet says, you went to king Jareb, but he could not heal you of your wounds. You must now return to your God or you will never be right. It is vain to look to priests or sacraments or religiousnesses—all these things put together are nothing. You must have personal dealings with your God and you must confess your sin to Him or you will be eternally undone. Go and do it this morning. Tell Him all that you know about your sin and ask Him to have mercy upon you for Jesus' sake. Seek to know Him as He manifests Himself in Jesus. Be willing to believe whatever He pleases to reveal. Be anxious to be reconciled to Him. Long to be at peace with the great God who made the heavens and the earth. Why should there be a quarrel between your Creator and your soul? The way of reconciliation

is by the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. You must, therefore, trust Jesus and then you shall find the peace of God. Oh may His Spirit help you to do this now. Seek Him and seek Him intensely, resolving that you will never cease to seek till you find God full of mercy and love to you. Come, I pray you, and turn unto the Lord now and may the Holy Spirit aid you in doing so. He has torn and He will heal you. He has struck and He will bind you up. After two days He will revive you. On the third day He will raise you up and you shall live in His sight.

God Himself must heal you, or you will never be healed. He who has broken your heart must give you comfort or you will never have any. Hasten to your chamber at once and then upon your knees cry out unto God with the prayer of faith. Be not content with your own sense of sin. Do not say, "I am doing fine, for I have felt my guilt." No, your sense of sin may be but the first drop of a shower of eternal remorse. Get away to God in Christ and rest not till you are there. Oh, if I had the power to put this into fitting and forcible words, I would implore every man and woman that I look upon not to live without God. He made you and you cannot be happy without Him. While He is angry with you, you cannot be at peace. He bids you come to Him. The blows of His providence are meant to separate you from the love of sin and drive you to your God. In Jesus Christ, the great Father stretches out His arms to you and says, "Come now and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Believe in Jesus and live. "Seek you the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near. 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." God bless you, my beloved friends, for His name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—HOSEA 5.
HYMNS FROM "OUR 0WN HYMN BOOK"—605, 620, 614.

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OUR MOTTO
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"With goodwill doing service, as to the Lord and not to men."
Ephesians 6:7.

THIS sentence was expressly addressed, in the first place, to "servants," which term includes and first of all intends those who unhappily were slaves. There were many slaves in the Roman Empire and the form of bondage which then existed was of the bitterest kind. I can imagine a slave becoming a Christian and so finding peace as to his former guilt and obtaining renewal of heart—and then, although rejoicing in the Lord, I can well conceive that he would often be downcast in view of his sad condition as a slave. I see him sitting down and moaning to himself, "I am a bondsman under a tyrant master. I have already endured many cruelties and may expect many more. I would be free, but there is no hope of escape, since there is no place to which I can flee, for Caesar's arm is long and would reach me at the very ends of the earth. I cannot purchase my liberty, nor earn it by long years of faithful servitude, neither can my fellow-bondsmen and I effect our deliverance by rebellion, for this has been tried and has ended in terrible bloodshed. I am hopelessly a slave. What shall I do? How shall I sustain my fate? My life is well-nigh intolerable—would to God it were at an end." I can imagine the poor slave going to his cramped bed under the stairs—for in any hole or corner the Roman slave might find such little rest as was allowed him—and there he would almost wish to sleep himself into another world. Being a Christian, as I have supposed, he pours out his heart before God in prayer and in answer to his cry, the Lord Jesus sets before him the rich consolation which He has provided for all that mourn—consolation strong enough to enable him to endure to the end and glorify the name of Jesus even under such hard conditions. While yet troubled in mind, this freeman of the Lord, who is yet in bonds to man, is met by the Savior Himself. He appears to him—I will not say in such form as could be perceived by the eyes, but in clear enough vision to be exceedingly influential over his spirit. Jesus stands before him. The five wounds adorning Him like precious rubies are infallible tokens. The face lit up with an unearthly splendor is still marked with the old lines of sorrow and the head bears the thorn-crown still about its brow. The poor slave casts himself at his Redeemer's feet with astonishment, with awe and with intense delight, and then I think I hear those dear lips, which are as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, saying to His poor servant, "Fulfill your service bravely. Do it unto Me. Forget your tyrant master and remember only Me. Bear on, work on, suffer on, and do all as unto Me and not unto men." Then I think I see the broken-hearted captive rising up refreshed

with inward strength and I hear him say, "I will even bear the yoke until my Lord shall call me away. Unless His providence shall open for me a door of liberty, I will patiently abide where I am and suffer all His will, hopefully and joyfully serving because He bids me do it for His sake." A vision which would so greatly comfort the poor Roman slave in his extremity may well stand before each one of us. Let us each hear our Savior say, "Live unto Me and do all for My sake." Our service is so much more pleasant and easy than that of slaves—let us perform it "with good will doing service, as unto the Lord and not to men." Our princely motto is, "I serve"—be this sentence emblazoned on our banner and used as the battle cry of life's campaign.

Notice well that the Holy Spirit does not bid us leave our stations in order to serve the Lord. He does not bid us forego the domestic relations which make us husbands or wives, parents or children, masters or servants. He does not suggest to us to put on a peculiar garb and seek the seclusion of a hermitage or the retirement of monastic or conventual life. Nothing of the kind is hinted at. but He bids the servant continue in his or her service, "with goodwill doing service." Our great Captain would not have you hope to win the victory by leaving your post. He would have you abide in your trade, calling, or profession and all the while serve the Lord in it, doing the will of God from the heart in common things. This is the practical beauty of our holy faith—that when it casts the devil out of a man, it sends him home to bless his friends by telling them what great things the Lord has done for him. Grace does not transplant the tree, but bids it overshadow the old house at home as before and bring forth good fruit where it is. Grace does not make us unearthly, though it makes us unworldly. True religion distinguishes us from others, even as our Lord Jesus was separate from sinners, but it does not shut us up or hedge us round about as if we were too good or too tender for the rough usage of everyday life. It does not put us in the salt box and shut the lid, but it casts us in among our fellow men for their good. Grace makes us the servants of God while we are the still servants of men—it enables us to do the business of heaven while we are attending to the business of earth—it sanctifies the common duties of life by showing us how to perform them in the light of heaven. The love of Christ makes the lowliest acts sublime. As the sunlight brightens a landscape and sheds beauty over the most common scene, so does the presence of the Lord Jesus. The spirit of consecration renders the offices of domestic servitude as sublime as the worship which is presented upon the sea of glass before the eternal throne by spirits to whom the courts of heaven are their familiar name.

I suggest my text to all believers as the motto of their lives.

Whether we are servants or masters, whether we are poor or rich, let us take this as our watchword, *"As to the Lord, and not to men."* Henceforth may this be the engraving of our seal and the motto of our coat of arms, the constant rule of our life and the sum of our motive. In advocating this gracious aim of our being, let me say that if we are enabled to adopt this motto it will, first of all, *influence our work itself*, and secondly, it will elevate our spirit concerning that work. Yet let me add, thirdly, that if the Lord shall really be the all in all of our lives, *it is after all only*

what He has a right to expect and what we are under a thousand obligations to give to Him.

I. Our subject opens with this reflection, that if henceforth whether we live, we live unto the Lord or whether we die, we die unto the Lord, THIS CONSECRATION WILL GREATLY INFLUENCE OUR ENTIRE WORK. Do you say, my brethren, that henceforth your whole life shall be a service of the Lord? Then it will follow, first, that you will have to live *with a single eye to His glory*. See how in verse 5 we are told, "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ"? If we do indeed live "as to the Lord," we must necessarily live wholly to the Lord. The Lord Jesus is a most engrossing Master. He has said, "No man can serve two masters," and we shall find it so. He will have everything or nothing. If indeed He is our Lord, He must be our sole sovereign, for He will not tolerate a rival. It comes to pass then, O Christian, that you are bound to live for Jesus and for Him alone. You must have no co-ordinate or even secondary object or divided aim—if you divide your heart, your life will be a failure. As no dog can follow two hares at one time or he will lose both, certainly no man can follow two contrary objects and hope to secure either of them. No, it behooves a servant of Christ to be a concentrated man—his affections should be bound up into one affection—and that affection should not be set on things on the earth, but on things above. His heart must not be divided or it will be said of him as of those in Hosea, "Their heart is divided; now shall they be found wanting." The chamber of the heart is far too narrow to accommodate the King of kings and the world or the flesh or the devil at the same time. We have no wish, desire, ambition, or exertion to spare for a rival lord—the service of Jesus demands and deserves all. Such is the eminence of this object that all a man has or can have of reason or strength must be spent this way if he is to win. Nor is this too much for our great Lord to expect from those for whom He has done so much. To whom should I give a part of myself, my Master? You have redeemed me wholly and I am altogether Yours—take full possession of me! Who else can be worthy of my heart? Who else can have a right to set foot within the province where You are King? Nay, rule alone, blessed and only Potentate! As You alone have redeemed me, treading the winepress of wrath alone for me, so shall You be sole monarch of my soul! You are all my salvation and all my desire and therefore You shall have all my homage and service. With such a Lord to be served, the current of our life must run in only one sole channel—that He may have it all and none may run to waste.

Next, to do service to the Lord, we must live with holy carefulness, for what says the context? We are to serve "with fear and trembling."

In the service of God, we should use great care to accomplish our very best and we should feel a deep anxiety to please Him in all things. There is a trade called paper staining, in which a man flings colors upon the paper to make common wall decorations. And by rapid processes, acres of paper can be speedily finished. Suppose that the paper stainer should laugh at an eminent artist because he had covered such a little space, having been stippling and shading a little tiny piece of his picture by the hour together? Such ridicule would itself be ridiculous. Now the world's

way of religion is the paper stainer's way, the daubing way—there is plenty of it and it is quickly done. But God's way, the narrow way, is a careful matter. There is but little of it and it costs thought, effort, watchfulness, and care. Yet see how precious the work of art is when it is done and how long it lasts—and you will not wonder that a man spends his time upon it. Even so, true godliness is acceptable with God and it endures forever and therefore it well repays the earnest effort of the man of God. The miniature painter has to be very careful of every touch and tint, for a very little may spoil his work. Let our life be miniature painting, "with fear and trembling" let it be worked out. We are serving the thrice Holy God who will be held in reverence of them that come near to Him. Let us mind what we do. Our blessed Master never made a faulty stroke when He was serving His Father. He never lived a careless hour, nor let drop an idle word. Oh, it was a careful life He lived—even the night watches were not without the deep anxieties which poured themselves forth in prayer unto God. And if you and I think that the first thing which comes to hand will do to serve our God with, we make a great mistake and grossly insult His name. We must have a very low idea of His infinite majesty if we think that we can honor Him by doing His service half-heartedly or in a slovenly style. No, if you will indeed live "as to the Lord and not unto man," you must watch each motion of your heart and life or you will fail in your design.

Living as to the Lord means living with a concentrated spirit and living with earnest care that our one service may be the best of which we are capable when at our best estate. Alas, how poor is that best when we reach it! Truly, when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants, but that all is seldom reached.

Further, if henceforth our desire is to live "as to the Lord and not unto men," then *what we do must be done with all our heart*. "In singleness of your heart," says the context, and again in the sixth verse, "As the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." Our work for Jesus must be the outgrowth of the soil of the heart. Our service must not be performed as a matter of routine—there must be vigor, power, freshness, reality, eagerness, and warmth about it—or it will be good for nothing. No fish ever came upon God's altar because it could not come there alive—the Lord wants none of your dead, heartless worship. You know what is meant by putting heart into all that we do—explain it by your lives. A work which is to be accepted of the Lord must be heart-work throughout—not a few thoughts of Christ occasionally and a few chill words and a few chance gifts and a little done by way of by-play—but as the heart beats so must we serve God. It must be our very life. We are not to treat our religion as though it were a sort of weekend farm which we were willing to keep going, but not to make much of, our chief thoughts being engrossed with the home farm of self and the world with its gains and pleasures. Our Lord will be *aut Caesar aut nullu*s, either ruler or nothing. My Master is a jealous husband—He will not tolerate a stray thought of love elsewhere and He thinks it scorn that they who call themselves His beloved should love others better than Himself. Such unchastity of heart can never be permitted—let us not dream of it.

We may not claim to be His if we give Him only lip service and brain service and hand service—He must have the heart. Oh, our beloved Lord, You did not spare Your heart from agony for us. The lance opened it with its entire costly double flood for our unworthy sakes. Therefore, You cannot be content to receive in return lifeless forms and cold pretences. You did live indeed—there was no sham about Your life. In all You did You were intense. The zeal of Your Father's house had eaten You up. You were clad with zeal as with a cloak which covered You from head to foot. Let us live somewhat after this glorious fashion, for a servant only truly lives when he lives as his Master. "He that is perfect shall be as His Master." If we are to live to the Lord, the fountains of our soul must flow with boiling floods and our life must be like a great Icelandic geyser casting up its columns of water which seethe and boil as they rise. As great earthquakes shake the very center, so must there be movements of life within us which stir our soul with vehement longings for Jesus and with intense yearnings for His glory. All our light and life must turn to love and that love must be all on flame for Jesus. If we truly live unto Christ it must be so.

What else says the passage before us? If we say—henceforth I will do the will of God as to the Lord and not unto men, then we must do it *under subjection,* for note well the words, "doing the will of God." Some people's religion is only another way of doing their own will. They pick and choose what precepts they will keep and what they shall neglect, what doctrines they shall hold and what they shall refuse—their spirit is not bowed into sacred servitude, but takes license to act according to its own pleasure. The freedom of a Christian lies in what I will venture to call an absolute slavery to Christ and we never become truly free till every thought is brought into subjection to the will of the Most High. Now if henceforth I live to God, I have no longer any right to say, "I will do this or that," but I must inquire, "My Master, what would You have me do?" As the eyes of the maidens are to their mistress, so are our eyes up to You, O Lord. Believer, your Master is to will for you henceforth. It is idle to say, "I shall live as to the Lord and not unto men," when all the while we intend to live in our own fashion. Which is to be master now, self or Christ? On every point this question must be settled, for if on any point we assume the personal mastery, the rule of Jesus is wholly refused. To go or to stand still, to suffer or to be in pleasure, to be in honor or to be in disgrace is no more to be our option or if we have a momentary choice it is to be cheerfully resigned before the sovereignty of Him whom we have now taken to be our all in all. There is no being a Christian if Christ does not have the throne in the heart and life. It is but the mockery of Christianity to call Jesus Master and Lord while we do not do the things which He commands.

Again, *we must do all this under a sense of the divine oversight.* Notice in verse 6 it is said of servants, "Not with eye service, as men-pleasers." What a mean and beggarly thing it is for a man only to do his work well when he is watched. Such oversight is for boys at school and mere hirelings. You never think of watching noble-spirited men. Here is a young apprentice set to copy a picture—his master stands over him and looks over each line, for the young rascal will grow careless and spoil his work

or take to his games if he is not well looked after. Did anybody thus dream of supervising Raphael and Michelangelo to keep them to their work? No, the master artist requires no eye to urge him on. Popes and emperors came to visit the great painters in their studios, but did they paint better because these grandees gazed upon them? Certainly not! Perhaps they did all the worse in the excitement or the worry of the visit. They had regard to something better than the eyes of pompous personages. So the true Christian needs no eyes of man to watch him. There may be pastors and preachers who are better for being looked after by bishops and presbyters, but fancy a bishop overseeing the work of Martin Luther and trying to quicken his zeal. Or imagine a presbyter looking after Calvin to keep him sound in the faith. Oh, no, gracious minds outgrow the governance and stimulus which comes of the oversight of mortal man. God's own Spirit dwells within us and we serve the Lord from an inward principle which is not fed from without. There is about a real Christian a prevailing sense that God sees him and he does not care who else may set his eyes upon him—it is enough for him that God is there. He has small respect to the eye of man; he neither courts nor dreads it. Let the good deed remain in the dark, for God sees it there and that is enough. Or let it be blazoned in the light of day to be pecked at by the censorious, for it little matters who censures since God approves. This is to be a true servant of Christ—to escape from being an eye-servant to men by becoming in the most sublime sense an eye-servant working ever beneath the eye of God. If we did but realize this, how well we should live! If now I recollect as I try to do, that God hears each word I speak to you from this pulpit—that He reads my soul as I address you in His name—how ought I to preach? And if you go to your Sunday school class this afternoon and picture Jesus sitting among the boys and girls and hearing how you teach them—how earnestly you will teach. At home when you are about to scold a servant or in the shop, when you think to do a rather sharp thing, if you think your Master stands there and sees it all, what a power it will have over you! Our lives should all be spent under the spell of, "You see me, God," and we should each be able to declare, "I have set the Lord always before me."

One more thought and it is this. If henceforth we are to serve the Lord and not men, then *we must look to the Lord for our reward and not to men*. "Knowing," says the eighth verse, "that whatever good thing any man does, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he is bond or free." Wages! Is that the motive of a Christian? Yes, in the highest sense, for the greatest of the saints, such as Moses, have "had respect unto the recompense of the reward," and it were like despising the reward which God promises to His people if we had no respect whatever unto it. Respect unto the reward which comes of God kills the selfishness which is always expecting a reward from men. We can postpone our reward and we can be content, instead of receiving present praise, to be misunderstood and misrepresented. We can postpone our reward, and we can endure instead thereof to be disappointed in our work and to labor on without success, for when the reward does come how glorious it will be! An hour with Jesus will make up for a lifetime of persecution! One smile

from Him will repay us a thousand times over for all disappointments and discouragements.

Thus you see, brethren, that if we do in very deed make this our rule and maxim, "As to the Lord and not to men"—our work will be shaped and fashioned most wonderfully. May God grant that the influence of this motive may manifestly sway our whole life henceforth until we close it for this world and commence it anew where we shall not need to shift our course, but shall continue eternally to live to the Lord alone.

II. May the Holy Spirit guide us while we reflect, secondly, that should this text become the inspiration of our life IT WOULD GREATLY ELEVATE OUR SPIRITS. What would it do for us? First, *it would lift us above all complaining* about the hardness of our lot or the difficulty of our service. "Alas," says one, "I am worn out. I cannot keep on at this rate. My position is so terribly trying that I cannot hold on much longer—it strains not only muscle and sinew, but nerve and heart. Nobody could bear my burden long. My husband is cruel, my friend is unkind, my children are ungrateful." Ah, poor heart, there are many others who wear the weeping-willow as well as yourself. But be of good courage and look at your case in another light. If the burden is to be borne for Jesus' sake, who loved you and gave Himself for you—by whose precious blood you are redeemed from the pains of hell—can you not bear it? Can you not bear it? "That is quite another thing," you say. "I could not bear it for a sneering master. I could not bear it for a passionate, obstinate mistress, but I could do anything and I could bear anything for Jesus." This makes all the difference—

"For Him I count as gain each loss,
Disgrace for Him, renown.
Well may I glory in His cross,
While He prepares my crown!"

We are satisfied to bear any cross so long as it is *His* cross. What wonders men can do when they are influenced by enthusiastic love for a leader! Alexander's troops marched thousands of miles on foot and they would have been utterly wearied had it not been for their zeal for Alexander. He led them forth conquering and to conquer. Alexander's presence was the life of their valor, the glory of their strength. If there was a very long day's march over burning sands, one thing they knew—that Alexander marched with them. If they were thirsty, they knew that he thirsted, too, for when one brought a cup of water to the king, he put it aside, thirsty as he was, and said, "Give it to the sick soldier." Once it so happened that they were loaded with the spoil which they had taken and each man had become rich with goodly garments and wedges of gold. Then they began to travel very slowly with so much to carry and the king feared that he should not overtake his foe. Having a large quantity of spoil which fell to his own share, he burned it all before the eyes of his soldiers and bade them do the same that they might pursue the enemy and win even more. "Alexander's portion lies beyond," he cried, and seeing the king's own spoils on fire, his warriors were content to give up their gains also and share with their king. He did himself what he commanded others to do—in self-denial and hardship he was a full partaker with his followers. After this fashion our Lord and Master acts towards

us. He says, "Renounce pleasure for the good of others. Deny yourself and take up your cross. Suffer, though you might avoid it. Labor, though you might rest, when God's glory demands suffering or labor of you. Have not I set you an example?" "Who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be rich." He stripped Himself of all things that He might clothe us with His glory. O, brothers and sisters, when we heartily serve such a leader as this and are fired by His Spirit, then murmuring and complaining and weariness and fainting of heart are altogether fled. A divine passion carries us beyond ourselves—

"I can do all things, or can bear
All suffering if my Lord is there."

Next, *this lifts the Christian above the spirit of laziness*. I believe great numbers of working men—I am not going to judge them for it—always consider how little they can possibly do to earn their wages. The question with them is not, "How much can we give for the wage?" That used to be, but, "How little can we give? How little work can we do in the day without being discharged for idleness?" Many men say, "We must not do all the work today, for we shall need something to do tomorrow—our masters will not give us more than they can help and therefore we will not give them more than we are obliged to." This is the general spirit on both sides and as a nation we are going to the dogs because that spirit is among us—and we shall be more and more beaten by foreign competition if this spirit is cultivated. Among Christians such a notion cannot be tolerated in the service of our Lord Jesus. It never does for a minister to say, "If I preach three times a week it is quite as much as anybody will expect of me, therefore I shall do no more." It will never be right for you to say, "I am a Sunday school teacher. As long as I get to class on time—some of you do not do that—and as long as I teach until the class time is over, I need not look after the boys and girls through the week. I cannot be bothered with them—I will do just as much as I am bound to do, but no more." In a certain country town, it was reported that the grocer's wife cut a plum in two, for fear there should be a grain more than weight in the parcel. The folks called her Mrs. Split-Plum. Ah, there are many Split-Plums in religion. They do not want to do more for Jesus than may be absolutely necessary. They would like to give good weight, but they would be sorry to be convicted of doing too much. Ah, when we get to feel we are doing service for our Lord Jesus Christ, we adopt a far more liberal scale. Then we do not calculate how much ointment will suffice for His feet, but we give Him all that our box contains. Is this your talk, "Bring the scales, this ointment cost a great deal of money and we must be economical. Watch every drachma, yes, every scruple and grain, for the nard is costly"? If this is your cool manner of calculation, your offering is not worth a fig. Not so spoke that daughter of love of whom we read in the gospels, for she broke the box and poured out all the contents upon her Lord. "To what purpose is this waste?" cried Judas. It was Judas who thus spoke and you know therefore the worth of that observation. Christ's servants delight to give so much as to be thought wasteful, for they feel that when they have in the judgment of others done extravagantly for Christ, they have but begun to show their hearts' love for His

dear name. Thus the elevating power of the spirit of consecration lifts us up above the wretched stinginess of mere formality.

Again, *this raises us up above all boasting of our work*. "Is the work good enough?" asked one of his servant. The man replied, "Sir, it is good enough for the price and it is good enough for the man who is going to have it." Just so, and when we "serve" men, we may perhaps rightly judge in that fashion, but when we come to serve Christ, is anything good enough for Him? Could our zeal know no respite, could our prayers know no pause, could our efforts know no relaxation, could we give all we have of time, wealth, talent, and opportunity, could we die a martyr's death a thousand times, would not He, the Best Beloved of our souls, deserve far more? Ah, that He would. Therefore is self-congratulation banished forever! When you have done all, you will feel that it is not worthy of the matchless merit of Jesus and you will be humbled at the thought. Thus, while doing all for Jesus stimulates zeal, it fosters humility—a happy blending of useful effects.

The resolve to do all as unto the Lord will elevate you above *that craving for recognition which is a disease with many*. It is a sad fault in many Christians that they cannot do anything unless the entire world is told of it. The hen in the farm-yard has laid an egg and feels so proud of the achievement that she must cackle about it—everybody must know of that one poor egg till all the country round resounds with the news. It is so with some professors—their work must be published or they can do no more. "Here have I," said one, "been teaching in the school for years and nobody ever thanked me for it. I believe that some of us who do the most are the least noticed and what a shame it is." But if you have done your service unto the Lord you would not talk so or we shall suspect you of having other aims. The servant of Jesus will say, "I do not want human notice. I did it for my Master. He noticed me and I am content. I tried to please Him and I did please Him and therefore I ask no more, for I have gained my end. I seek no praise of men, for I fear lest the breath of human praise should tarnish the pure silver of my service."

This would *lift you above the discouragement which sometimes comes of human censure*. If you seek the praise of men, you will in all probability fail in the present and certainly you will lose it in the future sooner or later. Many men are more ready to censure than to commend and to hope for their praise is to seek for sugar in a root of wormwood. Man's way of judging is unjust and seems fashioned on purpose to blame all of us one way or another. Here is a brother who sings bass and the critics say, "Oh yes, a very fine bass voice, but he could not sing treble." Here is another who excels in treble and they say, "Yes, yes, but we prefer a tenor." When they find a tenor, they blame him because he cannot sing bass. No one can be candidly praised, but all must be savagely censured. What will the great Master say about it? Will He not judge thus, "I have given this man a bass voice and he sings bass and that is what I meant him to do. I gave that man a tenor voice and he sings tenor and that is what I meant him to do. I gave that man a treble voice and he sings treble and so takes the part I meant him to take. All the parts blended together make up sweet music for My ears"? Wisdom is justified of her children, but folly blames them all round. How little we ought to care

about the opinions and criticisms of our fellow men when we recollect that He who made us what we are and helps us by His grace to act our part, will not judge us after the mode in which men carp or flatter, but will accept us according to the sincerity of our hearts. If we feel, "I was not working for you; I was working for God," we shall not be much wounded by our neighbors' remarks. The nightingale charms the ear of night. A fool passes by and declares that he hates such distracting noises. The nightingale sings on, for it never entered the little minstrel's head or heart that it was singing for critics—it sings because He who created it gave it this sweet faculty. So may we reply to those who condemn us, "We live not unto you, O men; we live unto our Lord." Thus do we escape the discouragements which come of ungenerous misapprehension and jealous censure.

This, too, will elevate you above the disappointments of non-success, ay, even of the saddest kind. If those you seek to bless are not saved, yet you have not altogether failed, for you did not teach or preach having the winning of souls as the absolute ultimatum of your work—you did it with the view of pleasing Jesus—and He is pleased with faithfulness even where it is not accompanied with success. Sincere obedience is His delight even if it leads to no apparent result. If the Lord should set His servant to plow the sea or sow the sand, He would accept his service. If we should have to witness for Christ's name in the stocks and by stones—and if our hearers should be even worse than blocks of marble and should turn again and rend us—we may still be filled with contentment, for we shall have done our Lord's will and what more do we want? To plod on under apparent failure is one of the most acceptable of all works of faith and he who can do it year after year is assuredly well-pleasing unto God.

This lifts us above disappointment in the prospect of death. We shall have to go away from our work soon, so men tell us, and we are apt to fret about it. The truth is we shall go on with our work forever if our service is pleasing to the Lord. We shall please Him up yonder even better than we do here. And what if our enterprise here should seem to end as far as man is concerned? We have done it unto the Lord and our record is on high and therefore it is not lost. Nothing that is done for Jesus will be destroyed—the flower may fade, but its essence remains. The tree may fall, but its fruit is stored. The cluster may be crushed, but the wine is preserved. The work and its place may pass away, but the glory which it brought to Jesus shines as the stars forever and ever.

Ay, and *this lifts us above the deadening influence of age* and the infirmities which come with multiplied years. What little we can do, we do it all the more thoroughly for Jesus as our experience ripens. If we must contract the sphere, we condense and intensify the motive. If we are living unto Christ, we love Him even when our heart grows cold to other things. When the eye grows dim earthwards, it brightens towards heaven. When the ear can hardly hear the voice of singing men and singing women, it knows the music of Jesus' name. And when the hand can do little in human business, they begins feeling for the strings of the celestial harp that it may make melody for the Well-Beloved. I know of nothing which can possibly elevate our spirit as workers for Christ like the sense

of doing all unto the Lord and not unto men. May the Spirit of God help us to rise into this perfect consecration.

I have not time to say more than just this word. A due sense of serving the Lord would ennoble all our service beyond conception. Think of working for Him—for Him, the best of masters—before whom angels count it glory to bow. Work done for Him is in itself the best work that can be, for all that pleases Him must be pure and lovely, honest and of good report. Work for the eternal Father, and work for Jesus are works which are good and only good. To live for Jesus is to be swayed by the noblest of motives. To live for the incarnate God is to blend the love of God and the love of men in one passion. To live for the ever-living Christ is elevating to the soul, for its results will be most enduring. When all other work is dissolved this shall abide. Men spoke of painting for eternity, but we in very deed serve for eternity.

Soon shall all worlds behold the nobility of the service of Christ, for it will bring with it the most blessed of all rewards. When men look back on what they have done for their fellows, how small is the recompense of a patriotic life! The world soon forgets its benefactors. Many and many a man has been borne aloft in youth amidst the applause of men and then in his old age he has been left to starve into his grave. He who scattered gold at first, begs pennies at last—the world called him generous while he had something to give and when he had bestowed all, it blamed his imprudence. He who lives for Jesus will never have ground of complaint concerning his Lord, for He forsakes not His saints. Never man regretted what he did for Jesus, save that he may regret that he has not done ten times more. The Lord will not leave His old servants. "O God, You have taught me from my youth and up to now have I declared Your wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not." Such was the prayer of David and he was confident of being heard. Such may be the confidence of every servant of Christ. He may go down to his grave untroubled. He may rise and enter the dread solemnities of the eternal world without a fear, for service for Christ creates heroes to whom fear is unknown.

III. I close by saying that if we enter into the very spirit of this discourse or even go beyond it—if henceforth we live for Jesus only, so as never to know pleasure apart from Him, nor to have treasure out of Him, nor honor but in His honor, nor success save in the progress of His kingdom—WE SHALL EVEN THEN HAVE DONE NO MORE THAN HE DESERVES AT OUR HANDS. For, first, we are *God's creatures*. For whom should a creature live but for his Creator? Secondly, we are His *new creatures,* we are the twice-born of heaven—should we not live for Him by whom we have been begotten for glory? As many as have believed in Jesus are the produce of that divine power which raised the Son of God from the dead—shall they not live in newness of life? God has taken these pains with us that He has made us twice over and He has made a new heaven and a new earth for us to dwell in—whom should we serve with all our mind but Him by whom we have been made anew? Then comes in *redemption*. We are not our own, for we are bought with a price. We dare not be selfish. We may not put self in opposition to God, but I must go further—we may not allow self to be at all considered apart from

God. Even when it seems that self and God might both be served at the same time, it must not be—self in any degree will spoil it all. We are never to be masters, but servants always —and to serve ourselves is to make ourselves masters. Turn your eyes, O my heart, to the cross and see Him bleeding there whom heaven adored. He is the light of glory, the joy and bliss of perfect spirits—and yet He dies there in pangs unutterable—dies for me. O bleeding heart, my name was engraved upon You! O tortured brain, Your thoughts were all of me! O Christ, you loved me and love me still and that I should serve You seems but natural. That I should pray to serve with intense white-hot enthusiasm is an impulse of my life. Do you not confess it so, my brethren? Besides, remember you are *one with Christ*. Whom should the spouse serve but her husband? Whom should the hand serve but the head? It scarcely is service. Christ is your *alter ego*, your other self—no, your very self—should you not live for Him? You are bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh and therefore you must love Him. Let a divine selfishness impel you to love your Lord. No hand, I think, counts it hard to be serving his own head. Surely, it can be no hardness to do service to Him with whom we are joined by bonds and bands of vital union. He is our Head and we are His body and His fullness. Let us fill up His glory. Let us spread abroad the praises of His name. God help us to finish this sermon never, but to begin it now and go on preaching it in our lives, world without end. For heaven shall be in this, "Not unto us, not unto us, but to Your name be praise." And the beginnings of heaven are with us now—the youth, the dawn of glory, in proportion while we say from our very souls, "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." And so shall it be henceforth and forever.

As to those that know nothing of this, seeing they know not Christ, may the Lord bring them to believe in Jesus Christ this day, that they may through His grace become His servants. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 6.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—145, 660, 661.

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THE WITHERED HAND
NO. 1485

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 22, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON.

"And behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. Then says He to the man, Stretch forth your hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other."
Matthew 12:10, 13.

NOTE well the expression. Jesus "went into their synagogue and *behold*, there was a man which had his hand withered." A mark is set, as it were, in the margin, as if it were a notable fact. That word, *"behold"* is a sort of note of exclamation to draw attention to it. "Behold, there was a man which had his hand withered." In many congregations, if there should step in someone of the great and mighty of the land, people would say, "Behold, there was a duke, an earl, or a bishop there." And although there were occasionally some great ones in our Savior's congregation, I find no notes of admiration about their presence, no, *"beholds,"* inserted by the evangelists as if to call attention to their appearance. No doubt if there were in a congregation some person of known intelligence and great learning who had earned a high degree, there are persons who would say, "Did you know that Professor Science or Doctor Classic was present at the service?" There would be a "behold" put to that in the memories of many. There were persons well learned, according to the learning of the day, who came to listen to Christ, but there are no "beholds" about their having been present. Yet in the synagogue there was a poor man whose hand had been withered and we are called upon to note the fact.

It was his *right* hand which was withered, the worse of the two for him, for he could scarcely follow his handicraft or earn his bread. His best hand was useless. His breadwinner failed him. I have no doubt he was a very humble, obscure, insignificant individual, probably very badly off and in great poverty because he could not work as his fellow craftsmen could, but not a man of any rank or learning or special intelligence. His being in the assembly was in itself nothing very remarkable. I suppose he had been accustomed to go to the synagogue as others of his townsmen did. Yet the Holy Spirit takes care to mark that he was present and to have the word, "behold," hung out like a signal that it might be regarded as a special subject for consideration that the crippled man was there.

And tonight, dear friends, it matters very little to the preacher or to the congregation that *you* are here, if you are some person of note or consequence, for we make no note of dignitaries here and attach no special consequence to anyone in this place where the rich and the poor meet together. But if you happen to be here as a needy soul wanting a Savior, if you happen to be here with a spiritually withered hand so that you cannot do the things that you would and you are wanting to have

that hand restored to you, there shall be a "behold" put to that—and especially shall it be doubly emphatic if tonight the Master shall say to you, "Stretch out your withered hand"—and if divine power shall restore that hand and a deed of grace shall be accomplished. What our Lord needed on that particular Sabbath morning was somebody to work upon, somebody whom He might heal and so defy the traditional legality of the Pharisees who said that it was wrong to heal on the Sabbath day. Christ did not want their health that morning—He looked for their sickness that He might illustrate His healing power. He did not want any greatness in anybody there—but He did want some poor needy one in whom He could display His power to heal. And that is just the case tonight. If you are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing, my Master does not want you. He is a physician and those who practice the healing art look out for sickness as their sphere of operation. If we were to tell a wise physician of a town where nobody was sick and everybody enjoyed perfect health, he would not settle there unless he wished to retire from practice. My Master does not come into the assemblies where all feel themselves quite content with themselves—where there are no blind eyes, no deaf ears, no broken hearts, no withered hands—for what do such folks need with a Savior? He looks around and His eye fixes itself upon pain, upon necessity, upon incapacity, upon sinfulness, upon everything to which He can do good—for what He wants in us mortals is the opportunity to do us good—and not a pretense on our part that we can do Him good.

I begin with this because my talk tonight will be very simple and it will only be meant for those of you who want my Lord and Master. Those of you who do not need Him can go, but you that want Him, it may be you shall find Him tonight and there shall be the record kept in heaven, not of those who were here, who said, "We see," nor of those who said, "Our hand is strong and deft for labor," but there shall be a register of blind ones who shall say, "You Son of David, open our eyes," and of withered ones who shall tonight stretch out their withered hands in obedience to His divine command. I do not know that our crippled friend when he went to the synagogue that morning expected to get his withered hand healed. Being perhaps a devout man, he went there to worship, but he got more than he went for. And it may be that some of you whom God means to bless tonight do not know what you have come here for. You came because you somehow love the ordinances of God's house and you feel happy in hearing the gospel preached. You have never yet laid hold of the gospel for yourselves, never enjoyed its privileges and blessings as your own, but still you have a hankering after the best things. What if tonight the hour has come—the hour which sovereign grace has marked in a red letter in the calendar of love—in which your withered hand shall be made strong and your sin shall be forgiven! What bliss if you shall go your way to glorify God because a notable miracle of grace has been worked in you! God grant it may be so done by the power of the Holy Spirit. I entreat those of you who love the Master to pray Him to work wonders at this time upon many—and His shall be the praise.

I. First, we will say a little about THE PERSON TO WHOM THE COMMAND IN OUR TEXT IS ADDRESSED. "Then said Jesus to the man, stretch forth your hand."

This command was addressed, then, to *a man who was hopelessly incapable of obeying*. "Stretch forth your hand." I do not know whether his arm was paralyzed or only his hand. As a general rule, when a thorough paralysis, not a partial one, takes place in the hand, it seizes the entire member and both hand and arm are paralyzed. We usually speak of this man as if the entire limb had been dried up and yet I do not see in Matthew, Mark, or Luke any express declaration that the whole arm was withered. It seems to me to have been a case in which the hand only was affected. We used to have not far from here, I remember at Kennington Gate, a lad who would frequently get on the step of the omnibus and exhibit his hands, which hung down as if his wrists were broken, and he would cry," Poor boy! Poor boy!" and appeal to our compassion. I fancy that his case was a picture of the one before us in which, not the arm perhaps, but the hand had become dried up. We cannot positively decide that the arm was still unwithered, but we may notice that our Lord did not say, "Stretch out your arm," but, "your hand," so that He points to the hand as the place where the paralysis lay. If He had said, "Stretch out your arm," as the text does not declare that the arm was dried up, we should have said that Christ bade him do exactly what he was capable of doing and there would have been no miracle in it. But inasmuch as Jesus says, "Stretch forth your hand," it is clear that the mischief was in the hand, if not in the arm, and so it was putting him to do what he could not possibly do, for the man's hand was assuredly withered. It was not a sham disease. He had not made a pretense of being paralyzed, but he was really incapable. The hand had lost the moisture of life. The spirits which gave it strength had been dried out of it and there it was a withered, wilted, useless thing with which he could do nothing. And yet it was to such a man that Jesus said, "Stretch forth your hand."

This is very important for us to notice, because some of you under a burden of sin think that Christ does not save real sinners—that those people whom He saves are, in some respects, not quite so bad as you—that there is not such an intensity of sin about them as about your case, or if an intensity of sin, yet not such an utter hopelessness and helplessness as there is about you. You feel quite dried up and utterly without strength. Dear hearer, it is exactly to such as you that the Lord Jesus Christ directs the commands of the gospel. We are bidden to preach to you, saying, "Believe," or at other times, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." These commandments are not addressed, as some say they are, to sensible sinners, but to insensible sinners, to stupid sinners, to sinners who cannot, so far as moral ability is concerned, obey the command at all. Such are bidden so to do by Him, who in this case bade the man do what he naturally in and of himself was quite incapable of doing—because, you see, if he could stretch out his hand himself—there was no miracle wanted, for the man's hand was not withered at all. But it is clear that he could not move his hand and yet the Savior addressed him as if he could

do it—in which I see a symbol of the gospel way of speaking to the sinner—for the gospel cries to him in all his misery and incapacity, "To you, even to you, is the word of this salvation sent." This very incapacity and inability of yours is but the space in which the divine power may be displayed and because you are thus incapable and because you are thus unable, therefore to you does the gospel come that the excellence of the power may be seen to dwell in the gospel and in the Savior Himself, and not at all in the person who is saved.

The command, then, which brought healing with it, was addressed to one who was utterly incapable.

But, mark you, it came to one *who was perfectly willing*, for this man was quite prepared to do whatever Jesus bade him do. If you had questioned him, you would have found no desire to retain that withered hand and no wish that his fingers should remain lifeless and useless. If you had said to him, "Poor man, would you like to have your hand restored?" tears would have been in his eyes and he would have replied, "Ay, that I would, that I might earn bread for my dear children, that I might not have to go about begging and have to depend upon the help of others or only earn a hard crust with this left hand of mine. I wish above all things that I could have my hand restored!" But the worst of many unconverted people is that they do not want to be healed—do not want to be restored. As soon as a man truly longs for salvation, then salvation has already come to him. But the most of you do not wish to be saved. "Oh," you say, "we truly wish to be saved." I do not think so, for what do you mean by being saved? Do you mean being saved from going down to hell? Everybody, of course, wishes that. Did you ever meet a thief that would not like to be saved from going to prison or being locked up by the policeman? But when we talk about salvation, we mean being saved from the habit of wrong-doing—being saved from the power of evil, the love of sin, the practice of folly—and the power to find pleasure in transgression. Do you wish to be saved from pleasurable and gainful sins? Find me the drunkard who sincerely prays to be delivered from drunkenness. Bring me an unchaste man who pines to be pure. Find me one who is a habitual liar and yet longs to speak the truth. Bring me one who has been selfish and who in his very heart hates himself for it and longs to be full of love and to be made Christ-like. Why, half the battle is won in such cases. The initial step is taken. The parallel holds good in the spiritual world. The character I have in my mind's eye is the case of a soul desiring to be what it cannot be and to do what it cannot do—and yet desiring it. I mean the man who cries in agony, "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." "I would, but cannot, repent. My heart feels like a stone. I would love Christ, but alas, I feel that I am fettered to the world. I would be holy, but alas, sin comes violently upon me and carries me away." It is to such people that Jesus Christ's gospel comes with the force of a command. Will you be made whole, my friend? Then you may be. Do you desire to be saved from sin? You may be. Do you wish to be emancipated from the bondage of corruption? You may be. And this is the only way in which you may be saved, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." His name is called Jesus,

for He shall save His people from their sins. He has come on purpose to do this to real sinners, and not to mere pretenders, for it is clear that He cannot save men from sins if they have none. He cannot heal withered hands if there are no withered hands to be healed. He comes to you that want Him, to you that are guilty, to you whose hands are withered. Even to you is this glorious word of the good news proclaimed. God grant you grace to hear it believingly and to feel its power!

II. Secondly, I want to speak a little upon THE PERSON WHO GAVE THE COMMAND. It was *Jesus* who gave it. *He* said, "Stretch forth your hand."

Did our Lord speak this in ignorance, supposing that the man could do so? By no means, for in Him is abundant knowledge. He had just read the hearts of the Pharisees and you may be sure that He who could read those subtle spirits could certainly see the outward condition of this patient. He knew that the man's hand was withered and yet He said, "Stretch forth your hand." When I read in Scripture the command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," I am sure that Jesus Christ knows what He is saying. "Go you," He said, "into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Yes, to every creature. Suppose that some of His disciples had been very orthodox and had come back and said, "Lord, was there not a mistake about the persons? Why preach to every creature? Are not some of them dead in sin? We would rather preach to character." I have heard some of Christ's professed servants say that to bid dead sinners live is of no more use than to shake a handkerchief over the graves in which the dead are buried. And my reply to them has been, "You are quite right. Do not do it, for it is evident you are not called to it. Go home and go to bed. The Lord never sent you to do anything of the kind, for you own you have no faith in it." But if my Master sent *me* as the herald of resurrection and bade me shake a handkerchief over the graves of the dead, I would do it, and I should expect that this or that handkerchief, if *He* commanded it to be shaken, would raise the dead, for Jesus Christ knows what He is doing when He sends His servants. If He does not send us, it is a fool's errand indeed to go and say, "You dead men, live." but His commission makes all the difference. We are to say to the dead, "Awake, and Christ shall give you life." What? Wake first and then get life afterwards? I shall not try to explain it, but that is the order of the Scripture, "Awake, you that sleep and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you life." If my Master puts it so, I am quite satisfied to quote His words. I cannot explain it, but I delight to take Him in His own way and blindly follow His every step and believe His every word. If He bids me say, "Arise from the dead," I will gladly do it now. In the name of Jesus, you dead ones, live; break, you hard hearts; dissolve, you hearts of steel; believe, you unbelievers; lay hold on Christ, you ungodly ones. If He speaks by His ministers, that word shall be with power—if He speak not by us, it is little matter how we speak. Well may the judicious brother say that there would be no use in *his* bidding the dead arise, for he confesses that his Master is not with him. Let him therefore, go home till his Master is with him. If his Master were with him, then would he speak his Master's word and he would not be afraid of being called foolish. It is the

Lord Jesus Christ who says to this man with the withered hand, "Stretch forth your hand."

To me it is a sweet thought that He is able to give power to do what He gives the command to do. Dear soul, when you are bidden to believe and you stand with tears in your eyes and say, "Sir, I cannot understand and I cannot believe," do you not know that He who bids you believe can give you power to believe? When He speaks through His servants or through His Word or directly by His Spirit upon your conscience, He who bids you do this is no mere man, but the Son of God. And you must say to Him, "Good Lord, I beseech You, give me now the faith which You ask of me. Give me the repentance You do command," and He will hear your prayer and faith shall spring up within you.

Did you never notice, dear souls, Christ's way of doing His work? His way is generally this—first, to give the command, then to help the heart to turn the command into a prayer, and then to answer that prayer by a promise. Take these specimens. The Lord says, "Make you a new heart." That is clearly a command. But by-and-by you find the psalmist David, in the fifty-first psalm, saying, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." And then, if you turn to Ezekiel, you get the promise, "A new heart also will I give you." First, He commands you, next He sets you praying for the blessing, and then He gives it to you.

Take another. The command is, "Turn you, turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel?" Then comes the prayer, "Turn You me and I shall be turned, O Lord." And then follows the blessed turning of which the apostle Paul speaks when he says that God has sent His Son to bless us by turning every one of us from his iniquity.

Take another case and let it refer to purging. We find the Lord commanding us to "Purge out the old leaven" and straightway there comes the prayer, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean." And then on the heels of it comes the promise, "I will surely purge away your dross." Or take another kind of precept, of a sweeter sort, belonging to the Christian. You are continually told to sing, "Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises." In another place we meet with the prayer, "Open You my lips and my mouth shall show forth Your praise." And in a third Scripture we have the divine promise, "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise." See, then, the Master's way of going to work—He commands you to believe or repent. He then sets you a-praying that you may be enabled to do it, and then He gives you grace to do it so that the blessing may really come to your soul, for everywhere gospel commands are uttered by Christ Himself to men's hearts, they, receiving them, find the ability coming with the command.

"But He is not here," says one, "He is not here." Verily I say unto you in His name, He is here. His word is, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world"—till this dispensation shall be ended, Christ will be where the gospel is preached. Where His message is honestly and truthfully delivered with the Spirit of God, there Jesus Christ Himself is virtually present speaking through the lips of His servants. Therefore, dear soul with the withered hand, tonight Jesus Himself says to you, "Stretch

forth your hand." He is present to heal and His method is to command. He now commands. O gracious Spirit, be present that men may obey.

III. It is time for a few words upon another point and that is upon THE COMMAND ITSELF. The command itself was, "Stretch forth your hand." I notice about that command that it goes to the very essence of the matter. It is not, "Rub your right hand with your left." It is not, "Show your hand to the priest and let him perform a ceremony upon it." It is not, "Wash your hand," but it is, "Stretch it forth." That was the very thing he could not do and thus the command went to the very root of the mischief. As soon as the hand was stretched out it was healed and the command went directly to the desired mark.

Now, my Lord and Master does not say to any of you sinners tonight, "Go home and pray." I hope you will pray, but that is not the great gospel command. The gospel is, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Paul stood at the dead of night, with the trembling jailer who hardly understood his own question, when he cried, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And Paul, according to the practice of some, should have said, "We must have a little prayer," or, "You must go home and read the Bible and I must further instruct you until you are in a better state." He did nothing of the sort, but there and then Paul said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." There is no gospel preached unless you come to this, for salvation comes by faith and by nothing short of it. That is just the difficult point, you tell me. Yes, and at the difficult point this command strikes and says, "Stretch forth your hand." Or in the case of the sinner, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ"; for remember, all that any of you ever do in the matter of eternal life, which has not faith in it, can be nothing after all but the effort of your carnal nature—and that is death. What can come of the movements of death but a still deeper death? Death can never produce life. Prayer without faith! What sort of prayer is it? It is the prayer of a man who does not believe God. Shall a man expect to receive anything of the Lord if he does not believe that God is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him? "Oh, but I must repent before I believe," says one. What kind of repentance is that which does not trust God—does not believe in God? An unbelieving repentance—is it not a selfish expression of regret because of punishment incurred? Faith must be mixed with every prayer and every act of repentance or they cannot be acceptable, and hence, we must go right straight to this point and demand faith, saying, "Believe and live." "Stretch forth your hand."

That stretching forth of the hand was entirely *an act of faith*. It was not an act of sense. As a matter of sense and nature, the man was, I say, weariless for it. He only did it because his faith brought the ability. It was a pure act of faith, that stretching out of the hand. "I still do not understand as yet," says one, "how a man can do what he cannot do?" But you will understand a great many other wonderful things when the Lord teaches you, for the Christian life is a series of paradoxes, and for my own part, I doubt an experience unless there is something paradoxical about it. At any rate, I am sure that it is so that I, who can do nothing of myself, can do everything through Christ which strengthens me. The

man who is seeking Christ can do nothing and if he believes on Christ, he can do everything and his withered hand is stretched out.

But in addition to its being an act of faith, it seems to me it was an *act of decision*. There sit the haughty, frowning Pharisees. Your imagination can easily picture those fine-looking gentlemen with fringes to their garments and phylacteries across their foreheads. There, too, are the scribes all wrapped up in their formal array—very grave and knowing men. Persons were almost afraid to look at them; they were so holy and so contemptuous. See, there they sit like judges at court to try the Savior. Now, Christ does, as it were, single out this poor man with a withered hand to be His witness and by His command He practically asks him which he will do—will he obey the Pharisees or Himself? It is wrong to heal on the Sabbath day, say the Pharisees. What do you say, you with the withered hand over yonder? If you agree with the Pharisees, of course you will decline to be healed on the Sabbath day and you won't stretch out your hand. But if you agree with Jesus, you will be glad to be healed, Sabbath or no Sabbath. Ah, I see. You will stretch out your hand and break away from the tyrants who would keep you withered. The man did as good as vote for Christ when he stretched forth his hand. Many a soul has found peace when at last he has held up his hand and said, "Sink or swim, lost or saved. Christ for me. Christ for me. If I perish I will cling to His cross and to Him alone will I look, for I am on His side, whether He will have compassion upon me or not." When that act of decision is performed, then comes the healing. If you hold up your hand for Christ, He will make it a good hand, though now it is all paralyzed and drooping, like a dead thing. Unworthy as you are, He has the power, as you hold up your hand for Him, to put life into it and to give you the blessing your heart desires.

I think I hear somebody say, "Oh, sir, you would not be praising me too much if you were to say that I do wish to be saved and saved in Christ's own way. I would give my very eyes to love Him." Ah, you need not lose your eyes. Give Him your trust; give Him your soul's eyes. Look to Him and live. "Oh, that I could be saved," says one. "How I long for it." May the Holy Spirit lead you to resolve in your own soul that you will not be saved by anybody but Christ. O that you would determine—

"He that suffered in my stead,
Shall my Physician be.
I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me."

When that is done, I do not doubt that through faith in the Physician you will be quickened by divine power and you will find healing at once.

IV. So I will just lead you on, in the fourth place, to notice THIS MAN'S OBEDIENCE. We are told that he stretched forth his hand. Christ said, "Stretch forth your hand." Mark says, "And he did so." That is to say, he stretched forth his hand. Now, observe that this man did not *do anything else in preference to what Jesus commanded*, though many awakened sinners are foolish enough to try experiments. Christ said, "Stretch forth your hand" and he did so. If, instead of that, the man had walked across the synagogue and brought himself up to Christ, the Master would have said, "I bade you do no such thing. I bade you stretch forth your hand."

Suppose he had then, with his left hand, begun to grasp the roll of the law as it stood in the synagogue and had kissed it out of reverence—would that have been of any use? The Master would only have said, "I bade you stretch forth your hand." Alas, there are many, many souls that say, "We are bidden to trust in Jesus, but instead of that we will attend the means of grace regularly." Do that, by all means, but not as a substitute for faith or it will become a vain confidence. The command is, "Believe and live." Attend to that, whatever else you do. "Well, I shall take to reading good books, perhaps I shall get good that way." By all means read good books, but that is not the gospel—the gospel is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Suppose a physician has a patient under his care and he says to him, "You are to take a bath in the morning. It will be of very great service to your disease." But the man takes a cup of tea in the morning instead of the bath and he says, "This will do as well, I have no doubt." What does his physician say when he inquires, "Did you follow my instructions?" "No, I did not." "Then you do not expect, of course, that there will be any good result, for you have disobeyed me." So we, practically, say to Jesus Christ, when we are under searching of soul, "Lord, You bid me trust You, but I would rather do something else. Lord, I need to have horrible convictions. I want to be shaken over hell's mouth. I want to be alarmed and distressed." Yes, you want everything but what Christ prescribes for you, which is that you should simply trust Him. Whether you feel or do not feel, you should just come and cast yourself on Him, that *He* may save you and He alone. "But you do not mean to say that you speak against praying, and reading good books, and so on?" Not one single word do I speak against any of those things, any more than if I were the physician I quoted, I should speak against the man's drinking a cup of tea. Let him drink his tea, but not if he drinks it instead of taking the bath which I prescribe for him. So let the man pray—the more the better. Let the man search the Scriptures, but remember, that if these things are put in the place of simple faith in Christ, the soul will be ruined. Let me give you a text—did you ever hear it quoted properly? "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; but you will not come unto Me that you might have life." That is where the life is—in Christ—not even in searching Scripture, good as the searching of Scripture is. If we put even golden idols into the place of Christ, such idols are as much to be broken as if they were idols of mud or idols of dung. It matters not how good an action is—if it is not what Christ commands—you will not be saved by it. "Stretch forth your hand," He says. That was the way by which the healing was to come—the man did nothing else and he received a gracious reward.

Notice that *he did not raise any questions*. Now this man had a fair opportunity of raising questions. I think he might very fairly have stood up in his place and said, "This is inconsistent, good Master. You say to me, 'Stretch forth your hand.' Now, You know that if I can stretch forth my hand, there is nothing wrong with me and therefore there is no room for Your miracle. And if I cannot stretch forth my hand, how can You tell me so to do?" Have you not heard some of our friends, who like to make jests of holy things and scoff at our doctrines of grace, declare that we

teach, "You can and you can't; you shall and you shan't"? Their description is right enough, though meant to ridicule us. We do not object to their putting it thus if so it pleases them. We teach paradoxes and contradictions to the eye, if you only consider the letter—but if you get down into the innermost spirit, it is within these contradictions that the eternal truth is found. We know that the man is dead in trespasses and sins—steeped in a spiritual and moral torpor out of which he cannot raise himself—yet do we by the Master's own command say, "Awake, you that sleep and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you life." Or in other words, we say to the withered hand, "Be you stretched out," and it is done. The blessed result justifies that very teaching which in itself seems so worthy of sarcastic remark.

Notice further that what the man did was that *he was told to do—stretch out his hand* and he did stretch out his hand. If you had asked him, "Did you stretch out your hand?" perhaps he would have said, "Of course I did. Nobody else did." "Wait a minute, my good man. Did you *of yourself* stretch out your hand?" "Oh, no," he would say, "because I have tried many times before and I could not, but this time I did it." "Then how was it that you were able to do it?" "Jesus told me to do it and I was willing—and it was done." I do not expect that he could have explained the rationale of it and perhaps we cannot either. It must, indeed, have been a very beautiful sight to see that poor, withered, limp, wilted hand, first hanging down and then stretched out before all the people in the middle of the synagogue. Do you not see the blood begin to flow, the nerves gaining power, and the hand opening like a reviving flower? Oh, the delight of his sparkling eyes as at first he could only fix them upon the little finger and the thumb to see if they were really all alive! Then he turned, looked at that blessed One who had healed him and seemed anxious to fall down at His feet and give Him all the praise! Even so, we cannot explain conversion and regeneration and the new birth and all that—but we know this—that Jesus Christ says, "Believe," and we believe. By our own power? No. But as we will to believe (and He gives us that will) there comes a power to do according to His good pleasure.

I look around me, wondering where is the man with the withered hand tonight or where is the woman with the withered hand. To such I would say in my Master's name, "Stretch out that hand of yours." It is an auspicious moment. A great thing shall be done unto you. Believe now. You have said before, "I can never believe." Now trust Jesus. Sink or swim, trust Him.—

"Venture on Him, venture wholly.
Let no other trust intrude,
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

Our Lord Jesus never casts away a sinner who trusts in Him. Oh, I would almost put it like this—If you do not feel that you can come, or ought to come to Christ being so unworthy, sneak in. Sneak into His house of mercy, just as you have known a hungry dog steal in where there has been something to eat. The butcher very likely would deal him a kick if he saw him after a bone, but if he once gets it, he may as well make off with it and keep it to himself. There is this blessed thing about

my Master—if you can get a crumb from under His table, He will not take it away from you, for He never casts out those that come. However they come, He neither turns them away nor takes back the blessing. He never says, "Come here, sir, you have no right to hope in My grace." Remember the woman in the crowd that dared not come to Christ before His face, but who came behind Him and touched the hem of His garment? She stole the cure from Him, as it were, and what did He say? "Come here, My woman, come here. What have you done? O, what right had you to touch My garment and steal a cure? For this a curse shall come upon you"? Did He speak thus in indignation? Not at all! Not at all! He bade her come and she told Him the truth and He said, "Daughter, be of good cheer. Your faith has made you whole." Get at Him, soul! Behind or in front, push for a touch of Him! Make a dash at Him. If there is a crowd of devils between you and Christ, plow your way through them by resolute faith. Though you are the most unworthy wretch that ever trusted Him, trust Him now that it may be told in heaven that there is a bigger sinner saved today than ever was saved before. Such a salvation will make Christ more glorious than He ever was. And if yours is a worse case than He ever touched with His healing hand to this day, well then, when He has touched and healed you, as He will, there will be more praise to Him in heaven than He ever had before. O soul, I wish I could persuade you to draw near to Him, but only my Master can do it. May He draw you by His great grace!

V. The last thing to consider is THE RESULT OF THIS STRETCHING OUT OF THE MAN'S HAND IN OBEDIENCE TO THE COMMAND. He was healed.

I have already tried to set before you the fact that the healing was *manifest.* It was also immediate. The man had not to stand there a long time, but his hand was straightway healed—and yet the cure was *perfect,* for his hand was whole like unto the other, just as useful as his left hand had been, with all the extra dexterity which naturally belongs to the right. It was perfectly healed, though healed in a moment. You may depend upon it, that it was *permanently* healed for, though I have heard it said that saved souls fall from grace and perish, I never believed it, for I have never read of any of the cases which our Lord cured that they became bad again. I never heard of a withered hand that was healed and was paralyzed a second time. Nor will it ever be. My Master's cures last forever. I remember seeing in the shop windows some years ago that there was to be had within a *"momentary* cure" for the toothache. I noticed after a few months that the proprietor of that valuable medicine, whatever it was, had discovered that nobody wanted a momentary cure and so the word "momentary" was changed for the word, *"instantaneous,"* which was a great improvement. I am afraid that some people's salvation is a momentary salvation. They get a sort of grace and then they lose it again. They get peace and by-and-by it is gone. What is needed is permanence and there is always permanence in the work of Christ. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" and His healing is never revoked. O soul, do you see, then, what is to be had at this moment of Jesus? Healing for life; deliverance from the withering power of sin

through life and through eternity! This is to be had by cheerful obedience to the matchless command, "Stretch forth your hand," or in other words, "Trust, trust, trust." Only this week I was talking with one who said he could not trust Christ and I said, "But, my dear friend, we cannot have that. Could you trust me?" Yes, he could trust me. "Why can you trust me and not trust the Lord Jesus? I will put it another way. If you said to me I cannot trust you, what would that imply?" "Why," he said, "it would mean, of course, that you were a very bad fellow, if I could not trust you." "Ah," I said, "that is exactly what you insinuate when you say you cannot trust Jesus, for he that believes not has made Him a liar. Do you mean to say that God is a liar?" The person to whom I spoke drew back with horror from that consequence and said "No, sir, I am sure that God is true." Very well, then, you can certainly trust one who is true. There can be no difficulty in that, to trust and rest upon one whom you cannot doubt must follow as a matter of course upon your good opinion of Him. Your belief that He is true is a sort of faith. Throw yourself upon Him now. Just as I lean upon this rail with all my weight, lean like that upon the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. That is faith. If God's mercy in Christ cannot save you, be lost. Make it your sole hope and confidence. Hang on your God in Christ Jesus as the vessel hangs upon the nail. As a man casts his whole weight upon his bed, so throw yourself unreservedly upon the divine love which was seen in Jesus and is seen there still. If you do this, you shall be saved. And I do not mean merely that you shall be saved from hell, for the power of faith, working in you by God, the Holy Spirit, shall save you from loving sin anymore. Being forgiven, you will henceforth love Him who forgives you and you will receive a new principle of action which shall be strong enough to break the bars of your old habits and you shall rise into a pure and holy life. If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed—and free you shall be at once if you now trust Him. The Lord grant His blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE SHAME AND SPITTING
NO. 1486

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 27, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting."
Isaiah 50:6.

OF whom does the Prophet speaks? Of himself or of some other? We cannot doubt but what Isaiah wrote here was concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Is not this one of the prophecies to which our Lord Himself referred in the incident recorded in the 18th chapter of Luke's Gospel at the 35th verse? "Then He took unto Him the twelve and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spit on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death."

Such a remarkable prophecy of scourging and spitting as this which is now before us must surely refer to the Lord Jesus. Its highest fulfillment is assuredly found in Him alone. Of whom else, let me ask, could you conceive the Prophet to have spoken if you read the whole chapter? Who else could say in the same breath, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair"? What a descent from the Omnipotence which veils the heavens with clouds to the gracious condescension which does not veil its own face, but permits it to be spit upon! No other could thus have spoken of Himself but He who is both God and Man!

He must be Divine—how else could He say, "Behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness"? (v. 2). And yet He must, at the same time, be a, "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief," for there is a strange depth of pathos in the words, "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." Whatever others may believe, we believe that the Speaker in this verse is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, the Son of God and the Son of Man—our Redeemer. It is the Judge of Israel whom they have struck with a rod upon His cheeks, who here plaintively declares the grief which He has undergone! We have before us the language of prophecy, but it is as accurate as though it had been written at the moment of the event. Isaiah might have been one of the Evangelists, so exactly does he describe what our Savior endured!

I have already laid before you, in the reading of the Scriptures, some of the passages of the New Testament wherein the scourging and the shame of our Lord Jesus are described. We saw Him first at the tribunal of His own countrymen in Matthew 26 where we read, "Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their

hands." It was in the hall of the High Priest, among His own countrymen, that the shameful deeds of scorn were first worked upon Him. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." His worst foes were they of His own household—they despised and abhorred Him and would have none of Him. His own Father's farmers said among themselves—"This is the heir; let us kill Him and let us seize His inheritance." This was His treatment at the hands of the house of Israel.

The same treatment, or the like thereto, was accorded Him in Herod's palace where the lingering shade of a Jewish royalty still existed. There, what I might venture to call a pattern mixture of Jew and Gentile power, held court, but our Lord fared no better in the united company. By the two combined, the Lord was treated with equal derision (Luke 23:11). "Herod with his men of war set Him at nothing, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe." Speedily came His third trial and He was delivered altogether to the Gentiles. Then Pilate, the governor, gave Him up to the cruel process of scourging.

Scourging, as it has been practiced in the English army, is atrocious! It is a barbarism which ought to make us blush for the past and resolve to end it for the future. How is it that such a horror has been tolerated so long in a country where we are not all savages? But the lash is nothing among us, compared with what it was among the Romans. I have heard that it was made of the sinews of oxen and that in it were twisted the hucklebones of sheep with slivers of bone in order that every stroke might more effectually tear its way into the poor quivering flesh which was mangled by its awful strokes. Scourging was such a punishment that it was generally regarded as worse than death, itself, and, indeed, many perished while enduring it, or soon afterwards. Our blessed Redeemer gave His back to the smiters and the plowers made deep furrows there. O spectacle of misery! How can we bear to look?

Nor was that all, for Pilate's soldiers, calling all the troop together, as if there were not enough for mockery unless all were mustered, put Him to derision by a mock enthronement and a mimic coronation. And when they had finished that, they again buffeted and smote Him and spit in His face. There was no kind of cruelty which their heartlessness could invent just then which they did not exercise upon His blessed Person. Their brutal sport had full indulgence, for their innocent Victim offered neither resistance nor remonstrance. This is His own record of His patient endurance, "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting."

Behold your King! I bring Him forth to you, this morning, in spirit and cry, "Behold the Man!" Turn, here, all your eyes and hearts and look upon the despised and rejected of men! Gaze reverently and lovingly, with awe for His suffering and love for His Person. The sight demands adoration. I would remind you of that which Moses did when he saw the bush that burned and was not consumed—fit emblem of our Lord on fire with grief and yet not destroyed! I bid you turn aside and see this great sight, but first attend to the mandate—"Take off your shoes, for the place where you stand is holy ground."

All round the Cross, the soil is sacred. Our suffering Lord has consecrated every place where He stood and, therefore, our hearts must be filled with reverence while we linger under the shadow of His passion. May the Holy Spirit help you to see Jesus in four lights at this time. In each view He is worthy of devout attention. Let us view Him, first, as *the Representative of God.* Secondly, as *the Substitute of His people.* Thirdly, as *the Servant of Jehovah.* And fourthly, as *the Comforter of His redeemed.*

I. First, I invite you to gaze upon your despised and rejected Lord as THE REPRESENTATIVE OF GOD. In the Person of Christ Jesus, God Himself came into the world, making a special visitation to Jerusalem and the Jewish people, but at the same time coming very near to all mankind. The Lord called to the people whom He had favored so long and whom He was still intent to favor. He says, in the second verse, "I came," and, "I called." God did in very deed come down into the midst of mankind! Be it noted that when our Lord came into this world as the Representative of God, He came with all His Divine power about Him. The chapter before us says, "Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness."

The Son of God, when He was here, did not perform those exact miracles because He was bent upon marvels of beneficence rather than of judgment. He did not repeat the plagues of Egypt, for He did not come to smite, but to save. He did greater wonders and worked miracles which were far more apt to have won men's confidence in Him because they were full of goodness and mercy. He fed the hungry, He healed the sick, He raised the dead and He cast out devils. He did marvels equal to those which were worked in Egypt when the arm of the Lord was made bare in the eyes of all the people. It is true He did not change water into blood, but He turned water into wine! It is true He did not make their fish to stink, but by His word He caused the net to be filled, even to bursting, with great fishes.

He did not break the whole staff of bread as He did in Egypt, but He multiplied loaves and fishes so those thousands of men and women and children were fed from His bounteous hands. He did not slay their firstborn—He restored the dead! I grant you that the Glory of the Godhead was somewhat hidden in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, but it was still there, even as the Glory was upon the face of Moses when he covered it with a veil. No essential attribute of God was absent in Christ and everyone might have been seen in Him if the people had not been willfully blind. He did the works of His Father and those works bore witness of Him that He came in His Father's name. Yes, God was *personally* in the world when Jesus walked the blessed fields of the Holy Land, now, alas, laid under the curse for rejecting Him.

But when God thus came among men He was unacknowledged. What says the Prophet? "Why when I came was there no man? When I called was there none to answer?" A few, taught by the Spirit of God, discerned Him and rejoiced, but they were so very few that we may say of the whole generation that they knew Him not! Those who had some dim idea of His excellence and majesty still rejected Him. Herod, because he feared that

He was a king, sought to slay Him! The kings of the earth and the rulers took counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed. He was emphatically and beyond all others, "despised and rejected of men." Though, as I have said, the Godhead in Him was but scantily veiled and gleams of its Glory burst forth here and there, still the people would have none of it and the cry, "Away with Him! Away with Him, let Him be crucified!" was the verdict of the age upon which He descended.

He called and there was none to answer. He spread out His hands all day long unto a rebellious people who utterly rejected Him. Yet our Lord, when He came into the world, was admirably adapted to be the Representative of God—not only because He was God, Himself, but because as Man His whole Human Nature was consecrated to the world—and in Him was neither flaw nor spot. He was untouched by any motive other than the one desire of manifesting the Father and blessing the sons of men! Oh, Beloved, there was never one who had His ear so near the mouth of God as Jesus had! His Father had no need to speak to Him in dreams and visions of the night, for when all His faculties were wide awake there was nothing in them to hinder His understanding the mind of God and, therefore, every morning when His Father awakened Him, He spoke into His ear.

Jesus sat as a scholar at the Father's feet that He might learn, first, and then teach. The things which He heard of the Father He made known unto men. He says that He spoke not His own words but the words of Him that sent Him and He did not His own deeds, but, "My Father," says He, "that dwells in Me, He does the work." Now, a man thus entirely agreeable to the mind and will of the great God was fitted to be the Representative of God! Both the alliance of His Manhood with the Godhead and its perfect Character qualified it to be the fittest dwelling of God among men. Yes, dear Friends, our Savior came in a way which should at once have commanded the reverent homage of all men. Even His great Father said, "They will reverence My Son."

Enough of the Godhead was manifested to impress and no more, lest it should alarm. With a soul of gentlest mold and a body like our own, He was altogether adapted to be the Representative of God. His errand, too, was all gentleness and love, for He came to speak words in season to the weary and to comfort those that were cast down. Surely such an errand should have secured Him a welcome! His course and conduct were most conciliatory, for He went among the people and ate with publicans and sinners. So gentle was He that He took little children in His arms and blessed them—for this, if for nothing else—they ought to have welcomed Him right heartily and rejoiced at the sight of Him.

Our text tells us how contrary was their conduct towards Him to that which He deserved—instead of being welcomed, He was scourged—and instead of being honored, He was scorned! Cruelty smote His back and plucked off the hair from His face, while decision jeered at Him and cast its spit upon Him! Shame and contempt were poured upon Him, though He was God Himself! That spectacle of Christ, spit upon and scourged, represents what man virtually does to his God—what he would do to the Most High if he could. Hart puts it well —

"See how the patient Jesus stands,
Insulted in His lowest case!

Sinners have bound the Almighty hands,
And spit in their Creator's face."

When our parents broke the command of their Maker, obeying the advice of the devil rather than the Word of God and preferring a poor apple to the Divine favor, they did, as it were, spit into the face of God! And every sin committed since has been a repetition of the same contempt of the Eternal One.

When a man will have his pleasure even though it displeases God, he as good as declares that he despises God, prefers himself and defies the wrath of the Most High. When a man acts contrary to the commands of God, he does as good as say to God, "This is better for me to do than what You bid me do. Either You are mistaken in Your prohibitions, or else You do willfully deny me the highest pleasure and I, being a better judge of my own interests than You are, snatch at the pleasure which You refuse me. I judge You either to be unwise or unkind." Every act of sin does despite to the Sovereignty of God—it denies Him to be supreme and refuses Him obedience. Every act of sin does dishonor to the love and wisdom of God, for it seems to say that it would have been greater love to have permitted us to do evil than to have commanded us to abstain from it. All sin is, in many ways, an insult to the majesty of the thrice-Holy God and He regards it as such.

Dear Friends, this is especially the sin of those who have heard the Gospel and yet reject the Savior, for in their case the Lord has come to them in the most gracious form and yet they have refused Him. The Lord might well say, "I have come to you to save you and you will not regard Me. I have come saying to you, 'Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth,' and you close your eyes in unbelief. I have come saying, 'Let us reason together: though your sins are as crimson, they shall be as wool,' but you will not be cleansed from your iniquity. I have come with the promise, 'All manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven unto men.' What is your reply?" In the case of many, the answer is, "We prefer our own righteousness to the righteousness of God." If that is not spitting in the face of God, I know not what is, for our righteousness is well described as "filthy rags" and we have the impudence to say that these are better than the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus!

Or if we do not say this when we reject the Savior, we tell Him that we do not want Him, for we do not need a Savior—this is as good as to say that God has played the fool with the life and death of His own Son! What greater derision can be cast upon God than to consider the blood of Atonement to be a superfluity? He who chooses sin sooner than repentance prefers to suffer the wrath of God rather than be holy and dwell in Heaven forever! For the sake of a few paltry pleasures men forego the love of God and are ready to run the risk of an eternity of Divine wrath! They think so little of God that He is of no account with them at all. All this is, in reality, a scorning and despising of the Lord God and is well set forth by the insults which were poured upon the Lord Jesus.

Woe's me that it should ever be so! My God! My God! To what a sinful race do I belong! Alas, that it should treat Your infinite goodness so despitefully! That You should be rejected at all, but especially that You should be rejected when dressed in robes of love and arrayed in gentle-

ness and pity is horrible to think upon! Do you mean it, O Men? Can you really mean it? Can you deride the Lord Jesus who died for men? For which of His works do you stone Him when He lived only to do good? For which of His griefs do you refuse Him when He died only that He might save? "He saved others, Himself He cannot save," for He had so much love that He could not spare Himself! I can understand your resisting the thunder of Jehovah's power, for I know your insanity! But can you resist the tenderness of Jehovah's love? If you do, I must charge you with brutality—but in doing so I wrong the brutes to whom such crimes are impossible!

I may not even call this cruel scorning *diabolical*, for it is a sin which devils never committed and, perhaps, would not have committed had it been possible for them to do so! They have never trifled with a Redeemer, nor rejected the blood of Atonement, for our Lord took not up the fallen angels—He took up the seed of Abraham! Shall the favored race spit upon its Friend? God grant we may be brought to a better mind! But there is the picture before you. God Himself set at nothing despised, rejected, put to shame, perpetually dishonored in the Person of His dear Son. The sight should breed repentance in us. We should look to Him, whom we have scourged, and mourn for Him! O Holy Spirit, work this tender Grace in all our hearts!

II. And now, secondly, I want to set the Lord Jesus before you in another light, or rather beseech Him to shine in His own light before your eyes—AS THE SUBSTITUTE FOR HIS PEOPLE. Remember, when our Lord Jesus Christ suffered, it was not on His own account nor purely for the sake of His Father, but 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." There has risen up a modern idea which I cannot too much denounce—that Christ made no Atonement for our sin except upon the Cross—whereas in this passage of Isaiah we are taught as plainly as possible that by His bruises and His stripes, as well as by His death, we are healed.

Never divide between the life and the death of Christ. How could He have died if He had not lived? How could He suffer except while He lived? Death is not suffering, but the end of it! Guard, also, against the evil notion that you have nothing to do with the righteousness of Christ, for He could not have made an Atonement by His blood if He had not been perfect in His life. He could not have been acceptable if He had not first been proven to be holy, harmless and undefiled. The victim must be spotless, or it cannot be presented for sacrifice. Draw no nice lines and raise no quibbling questions, but look at your Lord as He is and bow before Him! Understand, my dear Brothers and Sisters, that Jesus took upon Himself our sin and being found bearing that sin, He had to be treated as sin should be treated.

Now, of all things that ever existed, sin is the most shameful thing that can be. It deserves to be scourged, it deserves to be spit upon, it deserves to be crucified—and because our Lord had taken upon Himself our sin—therefore He must be put to shame and He, therefore, must be scourged. If you want to see what God thinks of sin, see His only Son spit upon by

the soldiers when He was made sin for us! In God's sight sin is a shameful, horrible, loathsome, abominable thing—and when Jesus takes it, He must be forsaken and given up to scorn. This sight will be the more amazing to you when you remember who it was that was spit upon, for if you and I, being sinners, were scourged, smitten and despised, there would be no wonder in it—but He who took our sin was *God*, before whom angels bow with reverent awe and yet, seeing the sin was upon Him, He was made subject to the most intense degree of shame.

Seeing that Jesus stood in our place, it is written of the eternal Father that, "He spared not His own Son." "It pleased the Father to bruise Him: He has put Him to grief." He made His soul an offering for sin. Yes, Beloved, sin is condemned in the flesh and made to appear exceedingly shameful when you remember that even though it was only laid on our blessed Lord by imputation, yet it threw Him into the very depths of shame and woe before it could be removed! Reflect, also, upon the voluntariness of all this. He willingly submitted to the endurance of suffering and scorn! It is said in the text, "He *gave* His back to the smiters." They did not seize and compel Him, or, if they did, yet they could not have done it without His consent. He gave His back to the smiters! He gave His cheeks to those that plucked off the hair.

He did not hide His face from shame and spitting—He did not seek, in any way, to escape from insults. It was the voluntariness of His grief which constituted, in great measure, the *merit* of it. That Christ should stand in our place by force were a little thing, even had it been possible—but that He should stand there of His own free will and then, being there, He should willingly be treated with derision—this is Grace, indeed! The Son of God was willingly made a curse for us and at His own desire was made subject to shame on our account! I do not know how you feel in listening to me, but while I am speaking I feel as if language ought scarcely to touch such a theme as this—it is too feeble for its task!

I need you to get beyond my words, if you can, and meditate upon the fact that He who covers the heavens with blackness yet did *not* cover His own face! And He who binds up the universe with the belt which holds it in one piece, yet was bound and blindfolded by the men He had, Himself, made! He whose face is as the brightness of the sun that shines in its strength was once spit upon! Surely we shall need faith in Heaven to believe this amazing fact! Can it have been true, that the glorious Son of God was jeered and ridiculed? I have often heard that there is no faith needed in Heaven, but I rather judge that we shall need as much faith to believe that these things were ever done as the Patriarchs had to believe that they *would* be done.

How shall I sit down and gaze upon *Him* and think that His dear face was once covered with *human* spit? When all Heaven shall lie prostrate at His feet in awful silence of adoration, will it seem possible that once He was mocked? When angels, principalities and powers shall all be awakened to the rapture of harmonious music in His praise, will it seem possible that once the most abject of men plucked out His facial hair? Will it not appear *incredible* that those sacred hands, which are "as gold rings set with beryl," were once nailed to the Cross and that those cheeks which

are, "as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers," should have been battered and bruised? We shall be quite certain of the fact and yet we shall never cease to wonder that His side was gashed and His face was spit upon!

The sin of man in this instance will always amaze us! How could you commit this crime? Oh, you sons of men, how could you treat such an One with cruel scorn? O you brazen thing called Sin, you have, indeed, as the Prophet says, "a whore's forehead!" You have a demon's heart! Hell burns within you! Why could you not spit upon earthly splendors? Why must Heaven be your scorn? Or if Heaven, why not spit on angels! Was there no place for your base deed but my Well-Beloved's face? Was there no place for your spit but His face? His face! Woe is me! His face! Should such loveliness receive such shame as this?! I could wish that man had never been created, or that, being created, he had been swept into nothingness rather than have lived to commit such horror!

Yet here is matter for our faith to rest upon. Beloved, trust yourselves in the hands of your great Substitute. Did He bear all this shame? Then there must be more than enough merit and efficacy in this, which was the prelude of His precious death—and especially in His death itself—there must be sufficient merit to put away all transgression, iniquity and sin. Our shame is ended, for He has borne it! Our punishment is removed—He has endured it all! Our Redeemer has paid double for all our sins! Return unto your rest, O my Soul, and let peace take full possession of your weeping heart.

III. But time fails us and, therefore, we will mention, next, the third light in which it is our desire to see the Savior. Beloved, we desire to see the Lord Jesus Christ AS THE SERVANT OF GOD. He took upon Himself the form of a Servant when He was made in the likeness of man. Observe how He performed this service right thoroughly and remember we are to look upon this third picture as our copy which is to be the guide of our life. I know that many of you are glad to call yourselves the servants of God—take not the name in vain. As Jesus was, so are you, also, in this world—and you are to seek to be like He.

First, as a Servant, Christ was personally prepared for service. He was 30 years and more here below, learning obedience in His father's house—and the last years were spent in learning obedience by the things which He suffered. What a Servant He was, for He never went about His own errands nor went by His own will, but He always waited upon His Father. He was in constant communication with Heaven, both by day and by night. He says, "He awakens Me morning by morning. He awakens my ears to hear as the learned." The blessed Lord, before the day broke, heard that gentle Voice which called Him and, at its whisper, He arose before the sunrise and there the dawn found Him, on the mountain side, waiting upon God in wrestling prayer, taking His message from the Father that He might go and deliver it to the children of men.

He loved man much, but He loved His Father more and He never came to tell about the love of God without having as Man received it fresh from the Divine heart. He knew that His Father heard Him always and He lived in the spirit of conscious acceptance. Have you ever noticed that sometimes a passage will begin, "At that time Jesus answered and said," and

yet there is no notice that He had been speaking to anybody, or that anybody had been speaking to Him? What He said was an answer to a Voice which no ear heard but His own, for He was always standing with opened ears listening to the eternal Voice! Such service did Jesus render and you must render the same. You cannot do your Lord's will unless you live near to Him. It is of no use trying to preach with power unless we get our message from our heavenly Father!

I am sure you, as hearers, know the difference between a dead word which comes from a man's own brain and lips and the living Word of God which the preacher delivers fresh as the manna which fell from Heaven! The Word of God should come from the minister like bread hot from the oven, or better still, like a seed with life in it—not as a parched grain with the germ dead—but as a living Seed which roots itself in your souls and springs up to a harvest. This made our Lord such a good Servant that He listened to His Father's voice and yielded Himself to the Father's will to perfection.

Our text assures us that this service knew no reserve in its consecration. *We* generally draw back somewhere. I am ashamed to say it, but I mourn that I have done so. Many of us could give to Christ all our health and strength and all the money we have, very heartily and cheerfully—but when it comes to a point of reputation we feel the pinch. To be slandered, to have some filthy thing said of us—this is too much for flesh and blood. We seem to say, "I cannot be made a fool of! I cannot bear to be regarded as a mere impostor!" But a true servant of Christ must make himself of no reputation when he takes upon himself the work of his Lord. Our blessed Master was willing to be scoffed at by the lewdest and the lowest of men. The objects jeered at Him—the reproach of them that reproached God—fell upon Him.

He became the song of the drunk and when the rough soldiers detained Him in the guard room they heaped up their ridicule as though He were not worthy of the name of Man—

"They bow their knees to Me, and cry, 'Hail, King'!
Whatever scoffs or scornfulness can bring,
I am the floor, the sink, where they it fling—
Was ever grief like Mine!
The soldiers also spit upon My face
Which angels did desire to have the Grace
And Prophets once to see, but found no place—
Was ever grief like Mine?"

Herod and Pilate were the very dross of men and yet He permitted them to judge Him! Their servants were vile fellows and yet He resigned Himself to them. If He had breathed upon them with angry breath, He might have flashed devouring fire upon them and burned them up as stubble—but His Omnipotent patience restrained His indignation and He remained as a sheep before her shearers. He allowed His own creatures to pluck His facial hair and spit in His face!

Such patience should be yours as servants of God! We are to be willing to be made nothing of and even to be counted as the offscouring of all things. It is pitiful for the Christian to refuse to suffer and to become a fighting man, crying, "We must stand up for our rights." Did you ever see Jesus in that posture? There is a propensity in us to say, "I will have it

out." Yes, but you cannot picture Jesus in that attitude! I defy a painter to depict Him so—it is somebody else and not Christ. No! He said, "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting."

There is something more here than perfect consecration in the mere form of it, for its heart and essence are manifest in an obedient delight in the will of the Father. The words seem to me to express a cheerful willingness. It is not said that He *reluctantly* permitted His enemies to pluck His hair, or smite His back, but it is written, "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." He could not delight in it—how could He *delight* in suffering and shame? These things were even more repugnant to His sensitive Nature than they can be to us. And yet, "For the *joy* that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame." He was ready for this dreadful treatment, for He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it is accomplished!" He was ready for the cup of gall and willing to drink it to its dregs, though it was bitterness itself to Him! He gave His back to the smiters.

All this while—now follow me in this next point—there was no flinching in Him. They spit in His face, but what does He say in the seventh verse? "I have set my face like a flint." If they are about to defile His face, He is resolved to bear it! He girds up His loins and makes Himself more determined. Oh, the bravery of our Master's silence! Cruelty and shame could not make Him speak. Have not your lips sometimes longed to speak out a denial and a defense? Have you not felt it wise to be quiet, but then the charge has been so excessively cruel and it has stung you so terribly that you hungered to resent it? Base falsehoods awakened your indignation and you felt you must speak and probably did speak, though you tried to keep your lips as with a bridle while the wicked were before you.

But our own beloved Lord, in the Omnipotence of His patience and love, would not utter a word! No, but like a lamb at the slaughter He opened not His mouth! He witnessed a good confession by His matchless silence. Oh, how mighty—how gloriously mighty was His patience! We must copy it if we are to be His disciples. We, too, must set our faces like flints, to move or to sit still, according to the Father's will—to be silent or to speak, as most shall honor Him. "I have set My face like a flint," He says, even though in another place He cries, "My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels."

And do you notice, all the while, the confidence and quiet of His spirit? He almost seems to say, "You may spit upon Me, but you cannot find fault with Me. You may pluck My hair, but you cannot impugn My integrity. You may lash My shoulders, but you cannot impute a fault to Me. Your false witnesses dare not look Me in the face to let Me know who is My adversary—let them come near to Me. Behold, Adonai Jehovah will keep Me! Who is he that shall condemn Me! Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall eat them up." Be calm then, O true servant of God! In patience possess your soul. Serve God steadily and steadfastly though all men should belie you. Go to the bottom of the service—dive, even, to the

very depth—and be content, even, to lie in Christ's grave, for you shall share in Christ's Resurrection!

Do not dream that the path to Heaven is up the Hill of Honor! It winds down into the Valley of Humiliation! Imagine not that you can grow great eternally by being great here! You must become less and less and less—even though you should be despised and rejected of men—for this is the path to everlasting Glory. I have not time to expound the last two verses of the chapter but they read us a noble lesson. "He gave His back to the smiters." If, then, any of you walk in darkness and have no light, this is no new thing for a servant of God!

The Chief of all servants persevered, though men despised Him. Follow Him, then. Stay yourselves upon God, as He did, and look for a bright ending of your trials. He came out into the light, ultimately, and there He sits in inconceivable splendor at His Father's right hand! And so shall all the faithful come out of the cloud and shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father! Only bear on with resolute patience and Glory shall be your reward, even as it is His!

IV. Lastly, I am to set Him forth in His fourth Character, as THE COMFORTER OF HIS PEOPLE—but I must ask *you* to do this, while I just, as it were, make a charcoal sketch of the picture I would have painted. Remember, first, our blessed Lord is well qualified to speak a word in season to him that is weary because He, Himself, is lowly, meek and so accessible to us. When men are in low spirits they feel as if they could not take comfort from persons who are harsh and proud. The comforter must come as a sufferer. He must come in a lowly, broken spirit if he would cheer the afflicted. You must not put on your best dress to go and visit the daughter of poverty, or go with your jewels about you to show how much better off you are than she.

Sit down by the side of the downcast man and let him know that you are meek and lowly of heart. Your Master "gave His back to the smiters, and His cheek to them that plucked off the hair" and, therefore, He is the Comforter you need. Remember not only His lowliness, but His sympathy. Are you full of aches and pains this morning? Jesus knows all about then, for He "gave His back to the smiters." Do you suffer from what is worse than pain—from scandal and slander? "He hid not His face from shame and spitting." Have you been ridiculed of late? Have the graceless made fun of your godliness? Jesus can sympathize with you, for you know what unholy mirth they made out of Him! In every pang that rends your heart, your Lord has borne His share. Go and tell Him. Many will not understand you. You are a speckled bird, differing from all the rest and they will all peck at you—but Jesus Christ knows this, for He was a speckled bird, too. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners," but not separate from such as you. Go to Him and He will sympathize with you!

In addition to His gentle spirit and His power to sympathize, there is this to help to comfort us—namely, His *example*, for He can argue thus with you, "I gave My back to the smiters. Cannot you do the same? Shall the disciple be above his Master?" If I can but get on the doorstep of Heaven and sit down in the meanest place there, I shall feel I have an in-

finitely better position than I deserve and shall I think of my dear, blessed Lord and Master giving His face to be spit upon and then give myself airs, and say, "I cannot bear this scorn! I cannot bear this pain"? What? Does the King pass over the brook Kedron and must there be no brook Kedron for you? Does the Master bear the Cross and must your shoulders never be galled? Did they call the Master of the house, "Beelzebub," and must they call you, "Reverend Sir"? Did they laugh at Him, scoff at Him and must you be honored? Are you to be "gentleman" and "lady" where Christ was, "that Fellow"? For His birth they loaned Him a stable and for His burial He borrowed a grave. O Friends, let pride disappear and let us count it our highest honor to be permitted to stoop as low as ever we can!

And, then, His example further comforts us by the fact that He was calm during it all. Oh, the deep rest of the Savior's heart! They set Him up upon that mock throne but He did not answer with an angry word. They put a reed into His hand, but He did not change it to an iron rod and break them like potters' vessels as He might have done. There was no wincing and no pleading for mercy. Sighs of pain were forced from Him and He said, "I thirst," for He was not a stoic. But there was no fear of man, or timorous shrinking of heart. The King of Martyrs well deserves to wear the martyr's crown, for right royally did He endure—there was never patience like His!

That is your Copy, Brother! That is your Copy, Sister! You must write very carefully to write as well as that! You had need for your Master to hold your hand, in fact. Whenever children in Christ's School write according to His Copy, it is always because He holds their hand by His Spirit. Last of all, our Savior's triumph is meant to be a stimulus and encouragement to us. He stands before us, this morning, as the Comforter of His people. Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself lest you be weary and faint in your minds, for though He was once abased and despised, yet now He sits at the right hand of God and reigns over all things! And the day is coming when every knee shall bow before Him and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. They that spat upon Him will rue the day!

Come here, you that derided Him! He has raised you from the dead! Come here and spit upon Him now! You that scourged Him, bring your rods and see what you can do in this day of His Glory! Look! They flee before Him! They invoke the hills to shelter them! They ask the rocks to open and conceal them! Yet it is nothing but His face—that same face they spat upon—which is making earth and Heaven flee away! Yes, all things flee before the majesty of His frown who once gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off His hair!

Be like He, then, you who bear His name. Trust Him, live for Him and you shall reign with Him in Glory forever and ever! Amen.

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THE PROPHET LIKE UNTO MOSES
NO. 1487

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 3, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The Lord your God will raise up unto you a Prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren, like unto me; unto Him you shall hearken; according to all that you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto you, and will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him. And it shall come to pass, that whoever will not hearken unto My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him."
Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

MAN, the creature, may well desire communion with his Creator. When we are right-minded we cannot bear to be like fatherless children, born into the world by a parent of whom we know nothing whatever. We long to hear our father's voice. Of old time, before sin had entered into the world, the Lord God was on the most intimate terms with His creature, man. He communed with Adam in the garden. In the cool of the day He made the evening to be seven-fold refreshing by the shadow of His own Presence. There was no cloud between unfallen man and the Ever-Blessed One—they could commune together, for no sin had set up a middle wall of partition.

Alas, man, being in honor, continued not, but broke the Law of his God and not only forfeited his own inheritance, but entailed upon his descendants a character with which the holy God can hold no converse. By nature we love that which is evil and within us there is an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God—consequently, communion between God and man has had to be upon quite another footing from that which commenced and ended in the glades of Eden. It was condescension at the first, which made the Lord speak with man, the creature. It is mercy, unutterable mercy, now, if God deigns to speak with man the sinner!

Through His Divine Grace, the Lord did not leave our fathers altogether without a word from Himself even after the Fall, for between the days of Adam and Moses there were occasional voices heard as of God speaking with man. "Enoch walked with God," which implies that God walked with him and had communion with him. And we may rest assured it was no silent walk which Enoch had with the Most High. The Lord also spoke to Noah, once and again, and made a Covenant with him. And then He, at still greater length and with greater frequency, spoke with Abraham, whom He graciously called His friend.

Voices also came to Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. And celestial beings flitted to and fro between earth and Heaven. Then there was a long pause and a dreary silence. No Prophet spoke in Jehovah's name; no voice of

God in priestly oracle was heard, but all was silent while Israel dwelt in Egypt and sojourned in the land of Ham. So completely hushed was the spiritual voice among men that it seemed as if God had utterly forsaken His people and left the world without a witness to His name.

But there was a prophecy of His return and the Lord had great designs which only waited till the full time was come. He purposed to try man in a very special manner, to see whether he could bear the Presence of the Lord or not. He resolved to take a family, multiply it into a nation and set it apart for Himself. And to that nation He would make a revelation of Himself of the most extraordinary character. So He took the people who had slaved among the brick kilns of Egypt and made them His elect—the nation of His choice—ordained to be a nation of priests, a people near unto Him if they had but Grace to bear the honor.

Though they had lain among the pots, with a high hand and an outstretched arm He delivered them and with gracious love He favored them so that they became for beauty and excellence as the wings of a dove that are covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold. He divided the Red Sea and made them a way of escape and afterwards set that sea as a barrier between them and their former masters. He took them into the wilderness and there fed them with manna which dropped from Heaven and with water out of the rock did He sustain them. After a while He began to speak to them as He had never spoken to any nation before.

He spoke with them from the top of Sinai, so that they heard His Voice out of the midst of the fire and in astonishment they cried, "We have seen this day that God does talk with man and he lives." But the experiment failed. Man was not in a condition to hear the direct Voice of God. On the very first day the people were in such terror and alarm that they cried out, "This great fire will consume us! If we hear the Voice of the Lord our God any more we shall die." As they stood still at a distance to hear the words of God's perfect Law they were filled with great fear. So terrible was the sight that even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake."

The people could not endure that which was commanded and entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more. They felt the need of someone to interpose—a daysman, an interpreter—someone was needed to come between them and God. Even those among them that were the most spiritual and understood and loved God better than the rest confessed that they could not endure the thunder of His dreadful Voice. And so their elders and the heads of their tribes came to Moses and said, "Go you near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say: and speak you unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto you; and we will hear it, and do it."

The Lord knew that man would always be unable to hear his Maker's voice and He, therefore, determined not only to speak by Moses, but to speak by His servants, the Prophets, raising up here, one, and there, another. And then He determined, as the consummation of His condescending mercy, that at the last He would put all the words He had to say to man into one heart and that word should be spoken by one mouth to men, furnishing a full, complete and unchangeable revelation of Himself to the human race! This He resolved to give by One of whom Moses had learned something when the Lord said to Him in the words of our text, "I

will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto you, and will put My words in His month; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him."

We know assuredly that our Lord Jesus Christ is that Prophets like unto Moses by whom, in these last days, He has spoken unto us! See Peter's testimony in the third chapter of the Acts of the Apostles and Stephen's in the seventh chapter of the same book. "This Man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who has built the house has more honor than the house," yet did He bear a gracious likeness to Moses and therein His Apostles found a sure argument of His being, indeed, the Messiah, sent of God.

The subject of this morning's discourse is the Lord's speaking to us by Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man—and our earnest aim is that all of us may reverently hear the Voice of God by this greatest of all Prophets. Brothers and Sisters, this is the Word of God unto you this morning, that very Word which He spoke on the holy Mount, when the Lord was transfigured and there appeared with Him Moses and Elijah speaking to Him. And out of the excellent Glory there came the words, "This is My beloved Son, hear you Him." This is my message at this hour—"Hear you Him."

He says to you all this day, "Incline your ear and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live. Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." "See that you refuse not Him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaks from Heaven." Our meditation will run in this line—first, we will think for a moment upon *the necessity* for a Mediator. Secondly, upon *the Person* of the Prophet-Mediator whom God has chosen. And, thirdly, upon *the authority* with which this Mediator is invested, by which authority He calls upon us this day to listen to God's Voice which is heard in Him.

I. We begin by considering how urgently there existed THE NECESSITY for a Mediator. I need but very short time to set this forth. There was a necessity for a Mediator in the case of the Israelites, first, *because of the unutterable Glory of God* and their own inability to endure that Glory, either with their eyes, their ears, or their minds. We cannot suppose that the revelation of God upon Sinai was the display of *all* His greatness. No, we know that it could not be such, for it would have been impossible for man to have lived at all in the Presence of the Infinite Glory.

Habakkuk, speaking of this manifestation, says, "God came from Teman and the Holy One from mount Paran. His Glory covered the heavens and the earth was fall of His praise. And His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His hands." But he adds, "There was the hiding of His power." Despite its exceeding Glory, the manifestation upon the mount of God at Horeb was a subdued manifestation and yet, though it was thus toned down to human weakness, it could not be borne!

The unveiling of Jehovah's face, no mortal eye could bear! The voice with which God spoke at Sinai is by Moses compared to the voice of a trumpet waxing exceedingly loud and long—and also to the roll of thunder—and we all know the awe-inspiring sound of thunder when it is heard

near at hand, its volleys rolling overhead. How the crash of peal on peal makes the bravest heart, if not to quail, yet still to bow in reverent awe before God! Yet this is not the full Voice of God—it is but His *whisper*. Jehovah has hushed His Voice in the thunder, for were that voice heard in its fullness, it would shake not only earth, but also Heaven.

If He were for once to unveil His face, the lightning's flame would pale to darkness in comparison. The Voice of the Lord God is inconceivably majestic and it is not possible that we, poor creatures, worms of the dust, insects of a day, should ever be able to hear it and live! We could not bear the full revelation of God apart from mediatorial interposition. Perhaps when He has made us to be pure spirits, or when our bodies shall have been "raised in power"—made like unto the body of our Lord Jesus—we may *then* be able to behold the glorious Jehovah, but as yet we must accept the kindly warning of the Lord in answer to the request of Moses, "you cannot see My face, for there shall no man see Me and live."

The strings of life are too weak for the strain of the unveiled Presence. It is not possible for such a airy, spider-like thread as our existence to survive the breath of Deity if He should actually and in very deed draw near to us. It appeared clearly at Sinai that even when the Lord did accommodate Himself, as much as was consistent with His honor, to the infirmity of human nature, man was so alarmed and afraid at His Presence that he could not bear it—and it was absolutely necessary that instead of speaking with His own Voice, even though He whispered what He had to say, He should speak to another apart and afterwards that other should come down from the mount and repeat the Lord's words to the people.

This sufficient reason is supported by another most weighty fact, namely, that *God cannot commune with men because of their sin*. God was pleased to regard His people Israel at the foot of Sinai as pure. "Moses went down from the mount unto the people and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes." They had abstained, for awhile, from defiling actions and as they stood outside the bounds they were ceremonially clean—but it was only a *ceremonial* purity. Before long they were really unclean before the Lord and in heart defiled and polluted. The Lord said of them, "O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!"

He knew that their heart was not right even when they spoke obediently. Not many days after the people had trembled at Sinai they made a golden calf and set it up and bowed before it, provoking the Lord to jealousy so that He sent plagues among them. It is quite clear that after such a rebellion, after a deliberate breach of His Covenant and daring violation of His commands, it would have been quite impossible for God to speak to them, or for them to listen to the Voice of God in a direct manner. They would have fled before Him because of His holiness which shamed their unholiness! And because of their sin, which provoked His indignation. Because of their wandering, instability and treachery of their hearts, the Lord could not have endured them in His Presence.

The holy angels forever adore with that threefold cry, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth," and He could not permit men of unclean lips to profane His Throne with their unholy utterances. Oh no, my Brothers and

Sisters, with such a sense of sin as some of us have and as all of us ought to have, we should have to cover our faces and cower down in terror if Jehovah, Himself, were to appear! He cannot look upon iniquity, neither can evil dwell with Him, for He is a consuming fire. While we are compassed with infirmity we cannot behold Him, for our eyes are dimmed with the smoke of our iniquities. If we would see even the skirts of His garments, we must first be pure in heart and He must put us in the cleft of the rock and cover us with His hands.

If we were to behold His stern justice, His awful holiness and His boundless power apart from our ever-blessed Mediator, we should dissolve at the sight and utterly melt away, for we have sinned. This double reason of the weakness of our nature and the sinfulness of our character is a forcible one, for I close this part of the discourse by observing that the argument was so forcible that *the Lord Himself allowed it.* He said, "They have well spoken, that which they have spoken." It was no morbid apprehension which made them afraid. It was no foolish dread which made them start, for Wisdom, in the person of Moses, said, "I do exceedingly fear and quake."

The calmest and meekest of men had real cause for fear. God's face is not to be seen. An occasional glimpse may come to spirits raised above their own natural level, so that they can, for a while, behold the King, the Lord of Hosts—but even to them it is a terrible strain upon all their powers—the wine is too strong for the bottles. What said John, when he saw, not so much *absolute* Deity, but the Divine side of the Mediator? "When I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead." Daniel, the man greatly beloved, confesses that there remained no strength in him and his comeliness was turned into corruption when he heard the Voice of God!

And Job 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." No, God knows it is not silly fright nor unbelieving fear—it is a most seemly awe and a most natural dread which takes hold of finite and fallible creatures in the Presence of the Infinite and Perfect One! These frail tabernacles, like the tents of Cushan, are in affliction when the Lord marches by in the greatness of His power. We need a Mediator. The Lord knows right well that our sinfulness provokes Him and that there is, in us—in the best here present—that which would make Him to break out against us to destroy us if we were to come to Him without a covering and propitiation. We must approach the Lord through a Mediator—it is absolutely necessary.

God Himself witnesses it is and, therefore, in His mercy He ordains a Mediator, that by Him we may be able to approach His Throne of Grace. May the Holy Spirit make this Truth of God very plain to the consciousness of all of us and cause us to sing with the poet—

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred
Three are terrors to my mind.
But if Immanuel's face appears,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His Grace removes my sins."

II. This brings us to consider THE PERSON of the appointed Mediator and in my text we obtain a liberal measure of information upon this point. Read these blessed words, "The Lord your God will raise up unto you a Prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren." Dwell with sweetness upon this fact that our Lord Jesus was raised up from the midst of us, from among our brethren! In Him is fulfilled that glorious prophecy, "I have exalted One chosen out of the people." He is one of ourselves, a Brother born for adversity. He was born at Bethlehem, not in fiction, but in fact—He lay in the manger where the horned oxen fed. He was wrapped in swaddling cloths and dependent on a woman's loving care as any other baby might be. He was like ourselves in His growth from Infancy to Manhood, increasing in stature as we do from our childhood to our riper age. Though the holy Child Jesus, He was yet a Child and, therefore, He was subject to His parents.

And when He came forth as a Man, His was no phantom manhood, but true flesh and blood! He was tempted and He was betrayed. He hungered and He thirsted. He was weary and He was sorely amazed. He took our sicknesses and He carried our sorrows. He was made in all points like unto His brethren. He did not set Himself apart as though He were of an exclusive caste or of a superior rank, but He dwelt among us—the Brother of the race, eating with publicans and sinners—always mingling with the common people. He was not One who boasted His descent, or gloried in the so-called blue blood, or placed Himself among the *Porphyro-geniti* who must not see the light except in marble halls. He was born in a common house of entertainment where all might come to Him and He died with His arms extended as a pledge that He continued to receive all who came to Him!

He never spoke of men as the common multitude, the vulgar herd, but He made Himself at home among them. He was dressed like a peasant, in the ordinary smock of the country—a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout. And He mixed with the multitude, went to their marriage feasts, attended their funerals and was so much among them, a Man among men, that slander called Him a glutton and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. In all respects our Lord was raised up from the midst of us, One of our own kith and kin. "For this cause He is not ashamed to call us brethren."

He was our Brother in living, our Bother in death and our Brother in resurrection, for after His Resurrection He said, "Go, tell My Brethren." And He also said, "My Father, and your Father; My God, and your God." Though now exalted in the highest heavens, He pleads for us and acts as a High Priest who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. God has graciously raised up such a Mediator and now He speaks to us through Him. O sons of men, will you not listen when such an One as Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Man, is ordained to speak of the eternal God? You might be unable to hear if He should speak again in thunder, but now He speaks by those dear lips of love! Now He speaks by that gracious tongue which has worked such miracles of Grace by its words! Now He speaks out of that great heart of His which never beats except with love to the sons of men—will you not hear Him? Surely we ought to give the most earnest heed and obey His every word.

Moses was truly one of the people, for he loved them intensely and all his sympathies were with them. They provoked him terribly, but he still loved them. We can never admire that man of God too much when we think of his disinterested love to that guilty nation. See him on the mountain as Israel's advocate! The Lord said, "Let Me alone that I may destroy them, and I will make of you a great nation." That proposal opened up before Moses' eyes a glittering destiny! It was within his grasp that he should become the founder of a race in whom the promises made to Abraham should be fulfilled! Would not the most of men have greedily snatched at it?

But Moses will not have it! He loves Israel too well to see the people die if he can save them. He has not an atom of selfish ambition about him. And so with cries and tears he exclaims," Why should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Your fierce wrath and repent of this evil against Your people." He prevailed with God by his pleading, for he identified himself with Israel. Moses did, as it were, gather up all their grief and sorrow into *himself*, even as did our Lord. True Israelite was he, for he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter! He cast his lot with the people of God.

This is just what our blessed Lord has done. He will not have honor apart from His people, nor even life unless they also live. He saved others, Himself He could not save. He would not be in Heaven and leave His saints behind! He loved the people and so proved Himself to be One chosen out of their midst, a Brother among brethren. Mark well that while thus our Lord is our Brother, the great God has, in His Person, sent us One who is lifted up above us all in the knowledge of His mind. Thus says the Lord (v. 18), "I will put My words in His mouth." Our Lord Jesus Christ comes to us inspired by God. Not alone He comes, nor of His own mind, but He says, "The Father is with Me: I do always the things which please Him: the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works." Both in word and work He acted for His Father and under His Father's inspiration.

Brothers and Sisters, I beseech you not to reject the message which Jesus brings, seeing it is not His own, but the sure message of God! Trifle not with a single word which Jesus speaks, for it is the Word of the Eternal One! Despise not one single deed which He did, or precept which He commanded, or blessing which He brought, for upon all these there is the stamp of Deity! God chose One who is our Brother that He might come near to us and He put His own royal imprimatur upon Him that we might not have an Ambassador of second rank, but One who counts it not robbery to be equal with God, who, nevertheless, for our sake has taken upon Himself the form of a Servant that He might speak home to our hearts. For all these reasons, I beseech you despise not Him that speaks, seeing He speaks from Heaven!

The main point, however, upon which I want to dwell is that Jesus is like Moses. There had been no better mediator found than Moses up to Moses' day. The Lord God, therefore, determined to work upon that model with the great Prophet of His race and He has done so in sending forth the Lord Jesus. It would be a very interesting task for the young people to

work out all the points in which Moses is a personal type of the Lord Jesus. The points of resemblance are very many, for there is hardly a single incident in the life of the great Lawgiver which is not symbolic of the promised Savior.

You may begin from the beginning at the waters of the Nile and go to the close upon the brow of Pisgah and you will see Christ in Moses as a man sees his face in a glass. I can only mention in what respects, as a Mediator, Jesus is like Moses, and surely one is found in the fact that Moses, beyond all that went before him, was *peculiarly the depository of the mind of God.* Once and again we find him closeted with God for 40 days at a time. He went right away from men to the lone mountaintop and there he was, 40 days and 40 nights, and did neither eat nor drink, but lived in high communion with his God! In those times of seclusion he received the pattern of the tabernacle, the Laws of the priesthood, of the sacrifices of the holy days and of the civil estate of Israel—and perhaps the early records which compose the Book of Genesis. To whom else had God ever spoken for that length of time as a man speaks with his friend?

Moses was the peculiar favorite of God. From the first day of his call, when he was keeping his father's flock at the back of the desert, right to the day when God kissed away his soul on the top of Nebo, he was a man greatly beloved to whom God manifested Himself as to no other. Hear the Lord's own words to Aaron and Miriam. "And He said, Hear now My words: If there is a Prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known unto Him in a vision, and will speak unto Him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all My house. With Him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches: and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold. Why, then, were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?"

In this our Lord Jesus is like Moses, only He far surpasses him, for the communion between Christ and the Father was very much more intimate, seeing that Jesus is, Himself, essential Deity, and, "in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Cold mountains and the midnight air continually witnessed to His communion with the Father. Nor these, alone, for He abode with the Father! His language was always spoken out as God was speaking *within* Him. He lived *in* God and *with* God. "I know," He said, "that You hear Me always." Instead of having to point out when Christ was in communion with the Father, we have rather, with astonishment, to point out the *one* moment when He was not in communion with the Father, even that dread hour when He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Only that one time did the Father leave Him and even then it was inexplicable and He asked the reason for it—though He knew that He was suffering as the Substitute for man—yet did His desertion by God come upon Him as a novelty which utterly overwhelmed Him so that He asked in agony why He was forsaken. Moses, to take another point, is the first of the Prophets *with whom God kept up continuous Revelation.* To other men He spoke in dreams and visions, but to Moses by plain and perpetual testimony. His Spirit rested on him and he took of it to give thereof to Joshua and to the 70 elders, even as Jesus gave of His Spirit to the Apostles.

Sometimes God spoke to Noah, or to Abraham and others—but it was only upon certain occasions and, even then, as in the case of Abraham and Jacob, they must fall asleep to see and hear Him best. But with Moses, the Lord abode perpetually! Whenever he willed, he consulted the Most High and at once God spoke with him and directed his way. So was it with Christ Jesus. He needed not to behold a vision—the spirit of prophecy did not occasionally come upon Him and bear Him out of Himself—for the Spirit was given Him without measure and He perpetually knew the very mind and heart of God. He was *always* a Prophet, not *sometimes* a prophet, like he of old, of whom we read, "The Spirit of God came upon him in the camp of Dan." Or like others of whom it is written, "The Word of the Lord came to them."

At all times the Spirit rested upon Jesus—He spoke in the abiding power of the Holy Spirit more so than did Moses. Moses is described as a Prophet *mighty in word and deed* and it is amazing that there never was another Prophet mighty in word and deed till Jesus came. Moses not only spoke with matchless power, but worked miracles. You shall find no other Prophet who did both. Other Prophets who spoke well worked no miracles, or only here and there—while those who worked miracles, such as Elijah and Elisha, have left us but few words that they spoke—indeed, their prophecies were but lightning flashes and not as the bright shining of the sun.

When you come to our Lord Jesus you find lips and heart working together with equal perfectness of witness. You cannot tell in which He is the more marvelous—in His speech or in His acts. "Never man spoke like this Man," but certainly never man worked such marvels of mercy as Jesus did! He far exceeds Moses and all the Prophets put together in the variety and the multitude and the wonderful character of the miracles which He did. If men bow before Prophets who can cast down their rods and they become serpents—if they yield homage to Prophets who call fire from Heaven—how much more should they accept Him whose Words are matchless music and whose miracles of love were felt even beyond the boundaries of this visible world?

The angels of God flew from Heaven to minister to Him. The devils of the Pit fled before His voice and the caverns of death heard His call and yielded up their prey! Who would not accept this Prophet like Moses, to whom the Holy Spirit bore witness by mighty signs and wonders? Moses, again, was *the founder of a great system of religious law* and this was not the case with any other but the Lord Jesus. He founded the whole system of the Aaronic Priesthood and the Law that went with it. Moses was a Lawgiver—he gave the Ten Commandments in the name of God—and all the other statutes of the Jewish polity were ordained through him. Now, till you come to Christ you find no such Lawgiver—but Jesus institutes the New Covenant as Moses introduced the old!

The Sermon on the Mount was an utterance from a happier Sinai and, whereas Moses gives this and that command, Jesus gives the same in sweeter form and in a more Divine fashion and embodies it in His own sacred Person. He is the great Legislator of our dispensation He is the King in the midst of Jeshurun giving forth His commands which run very swiftly and they that fear the Lord are obedient to them. Time will fail us,

or we would mention to you that *Moses was faithful before God* as a servant over all his house and so was Jesus as a Son over His own house! Jesus was never unfaithful to His charge in any respect, but in all things ruled and served to perfection as the Anointed of the Father. He is the faithful and true Witness, the Prince of the kings of the earth.

Moses, too, was *zealous for God* and for His honor. Remember how the zeal of God's house did eat him up? When he saw grievous sin among the people, he said, "Who is on the Lord's side?" and there came to him the tribe of Levi and he said, "Go in and out, and slay you, everyone, his men that were joined to Baalpeor." Herein he was the stern type of Jesus who took the scourge of small cords and drove out the buyers and sellers and said, "Take these things away: it is written, My Father's house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves," for the zeal of God's house had eaten Him up.

Moses, by Divine Grace, was *very meek* and, perhaps, this is the chief parallel between him and Jesus. I have said, "by Divine Grace," for I suppose by *nature* he was strongly passionate. There are many indications that Moses was not meek, but very far from it until the Spirit of God rested upon him. He slew the Egyptian hastily and in later years he went out from the presence of Pharaoh "in great anger." Once and again you find him very angry—he took the tablets of stone and dashed them in pieces in his indignation, for "Moses' anger waxed hot," and that unhappy action which occasioned his being shut out of Canaan was caused by his "being provoked in spirit so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips" and said, "Hear now, you rebels! Must I fetch you water out of this rock?" Divine Grace had so cooled and calmed him that in general he was the gentlest of men and when his brother and sister thrust themselves into his place and questioned his authority, it is written, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."

In his own defense he has never anything to say—it is only for the people and for God that his anger waxed hot. Even about his last act of hastiness he says, "God was angry with me for your sake," not for his own sake. He was so meek and gentle that for 40 years he bore with the most rebellious and provoking nation that ever existed! But what shall I say of my Master? Let Him speak for Himself. "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest: take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls." Our children call Him, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild." The Man Jesus is very meek above all men that are upon the face of the earth. He has His indignation—

"Like glowing often is His wrath,
As flame by furious blast up blown,"

for He can be angry and the wrath of the Lamb is the most awful wrath beneath the sun! But still, to us, in this Gospel day, He is all love and tenderness. And when He bids us come to Him, can we refuse to hear?

So meek is the Mediator that He is Love itself, Incarnate Love! He is so loving that when He died, His only crime was that He was "found guilty of excess of love." Can we be so cruel as to reject Him? O Brothers and Sisters, do not refuse to listen to the voice of this Tender One by whom God speaks to you! Our Lord was like Moses in meekness and then, to sum it

all up —Moses was the *Mediator for God with the people* and so is our blessed Lord. Moses came in God's name and set Israel free from Pharaoh's bondage. Jesus came to set us free from a worse bondage and He has achieved our freedom. Moses led the people through the Red Sea and Jesus has led us where all the hosts of Hell were overthrown and sin was drowned in His most precious blood!

Moses led the tribes through the wilderness and Jesus leads us through the weary ways of this life to the rest which remains for the people of God. Moses spoke to the people for God and Jesus has done the same. Moses spoke to God for the people and Jesus always lives to make intercession for us. Moses proposed himself as a sacrifice when he said, "If not, blot my name out of the Book of Life." But Jesus *was* an actual Sacrifice and was taken away from the land of the living for our sakes, being made a curse for us! Moses, in a certain sense, died for the people, for he could not enter into the land, but had to close his eyes on Nebo.

Those are touching words, "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes"—words which, in a more Divine sense, may be fitly applied to Jesus—for God was angry with Him for our sakes. Right through to the very end our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, is a Prophet like Moses, raised up from the midst of His brethren. O my Hearers, listen to Him! Turn not your ear away from this Prophet of Prophets, but hear and live!

III. I close with that point and if my words are very few let them be weighty. Let us think of THE AUTHORITY of our great Mediator and let this be the practical lesson—Hear you Him. Brothers and Sisters, if our hearts were right, the moment it was announced that God would speak to us through Jesus Christ, there would be a rush to hear Him! If sin had not maddened men, they would listen eagerly to every Word of God through such a Mediator as Jesus! They would write each golden sentence on their tablets! They would hoard His Words in their memories! They would wear them between their eyes! They would yield their hearts to them!

Alas, it is not so, and the saddest thing of all is that some talk of Jesus for gain and others hear of Him as if His story were a mere tale or an old Jewish ballad of 1,800 years ago. Yet, remember, God still speaks by Jesus and every Word of His that is left on record is as solemnly alive, today, as when it first leaped from His blessed lips! I beseech you remember Christ comes not as an amateur, but He has authority with Him—this Ambassador to men wears the authority of the King of kings! If you despise Him, you despise Him that sent Him—if you turn away from Him that speaks from Heaven, you turn away from the eternal God and you do despite to His love! Oh, don't do it!

Note how my text puts it. It says here, "Whoever shall not hearken unto My words which He shall speak in My name, *I will require it of him*." My heart trembles while I repeat to you the words, "I will require it of him." Today God graciously requires it of some of you and asks why you have not listened to Christ's voice. Why is this? You have not accepted His salvation. Why is this? You know all about Jesus and you say it is true, but you have never believed in Him! Why is this? God requires it of you! Many years has He waited patiently and He has sent His servant again and

again to invite you. The men of Nineveh sought mercy in *their* day and yet *you* have not repented! God requires it of you!

Why is this? Give your Maker a reason for your rejection of His mercy if you can—fashion some sort of excuse, O you rebellious ones! Do you despise your God? Do you dare His wrath? Do you defy His anger? Are you so mad as this? The day will come when He will require it of you in a much more violent sense than He does today! The day comes when you shall have passed beyond the region of mercy and He will say, "I called you and you refused, why is this? I did not speak to you in thunder. I spoke to you with the gentle voice of the Only Begotten who bled and died for men—why did you not listen to Him? Every Sabbath My servant tried to repeat the language of His Master to you—why did you refuse it? You are cast into Hell—why did you not accept the pardon which would have delivered you from it?"

You were too busy! Too busy to remember your God? What could you have been busy about that was worth a thought as compared with Him? You were too fond of pleasure. And do you dare insult your God by saying that trifling amusements which are not worth the mentioning could stand in comparison with His love and His good pleasure? Oh, how you deserve His wrath! I pray you consider what this means, "I will require it of him." You who still harden your hearts and refuse my Master, go away with this ringing in your ears, "I will require it of him! I will require it of him. When he lies dying alone in that sick chamber I will require it of Him! When he has taken the last plunge and left this world and finds himself in eternity, I will require it of him! And when the thunder wakes the dead and the great Prophet like Moses shall sit on the Great White Throne to judge the quick and the dead, I will require it of Him! I will require it of Him."

My Master will require of me how I have preached to you and I sincerely wish it were in my power to put these things in better form and plead with you more earnestly. But, after all, what can *I* do? If you have no care for your own souls, how can I help it? If you will rush upon eternal woe. If you will despise the altogether Lovely One through whom God speaks to you. If you will live day after day carelessly and wantonly, throwing away your souls, oh, then, my eyes shall weep in secret places for you, but what more can I do but leave you to God? At the last I shall be compelled to say, "Amen," to the verdict which condemns you forever!

God grant that such a reluctant task may not fall to my lot in reference to any of you, but may you now hear and obey the Lord Jesus and find eternal salvation at once, for His dear name's sake. Amen.

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MORE AND MORE, OR LESS AND LESS
NO. 1488

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 10, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even what he has." Matthew 13:12.

TWO great general principles are conspicuous in the gospel. The first is that God gives of His grace to the empty, "He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich He has sent away empty." The second principle is that where God has given a measure of grace, it is His desire to give more, "He gives more grace." There is no stint with the Lord of love and no limit to the abundance of grace which those who come to Him may receive. He gives grace to those who have none and more grace to those whom He has already favored. These two principles do not contradict each other, but help to make each other complete. In their proper order they exhibit both sides of one truth and give us instruction as to the Lord's dealings with two different stages of spiritual condition. Each principle has its own range. Are you as yet unsaved? Then the principle which you have to do with is this, that God will fill the empty and feed the hungry. You have to go to Him with nothing of your own except your needs and ask for everything at His hands. Your wisdom is to hasten to the Savior just as you are, tarrying not to gather a price which you may carry in your hand, but coming empty-handed to the generous Lord. In all your sinfulness you must look to Him for pardon. In all your nakedness you must fly to Him for clothing. In all your weakness you must cry to Him for strength. Yes, in all your death you are to look to Him for life, even as He has said, "Awake you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Take care that you are quite clear upon this point, for unless your eye be single here your whole soul will be full of darkness. Grace is for the undeserving, the guilty, the needy—otherwise it would be no more grace. The gospel is not the law and therefore it does not demand a holy character as a condition of receiving its blessings, but it comes to sinners as they are, casts on them an eye of pity, forgives their sins, and makes them new creatures and holy creatures. In dealing with the sinner, God acts on the principle of undeserved love and unmerited favor. Trembling sinner, you have to go to Him with your empty bucket that He may fill it out of the deep well of His overflowing love.

When a man has received grace or when he professes to have done so, he comes under the second principle. He must take care that he has indeed and of a truth received that which God in the gospel presents to him, for if he does not at the very beginning receive really and truly the true grace of God, he will begin with falsehood and end in shame. He must see to it that he has the beginnings of grace or he

cannot have the increase. If there is a mistake as to the actual receipt of Christ into the heart, there may be an *appearance* of having Christ and this appearance may last for a while, but as there is really nothing commenced, there will be no addition thereto. While I am like the unsown soil, I am simply to receive the seed when it is scattered. But after the scattering of the seed, if I think I have received it, I must see to it that I am not deceived. I must watch that the word really does lodge in the furrows of my soul, for unless that is the case, beyond all question—so far from obtaining growth in grace, I shall by-and-by lose what I think I have and I shall be openly proven to be barren and unfruitful. If I have received the light of heaven into my soul, however small its beginnings, the Lord will add a gracious increase. And as I follow on to know Him, I shall be as the shining light which shines more and more unto the perfect day. If I am a mere pretender, I shall fade away, but if I am a sincere believer I shall become brighter and brighter. This last principle I shall endeavor to use at this time for our warning and instruction. May the Holy Spirit greatly bless it to our hearts so that those who profess to be the people of God may make sure that their profession is founded on the truth and may those who are mere hearers of the gospel be disturbed in their consciences and aroused from the sleep of death.

I. First, we shall study this principle as IT IS ILLUSTRATED IN THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER. YOU will not fail to observe that this saying of our Lord occurs in three evangelists in connection with the parable of the sower. Besides our text, you will find it in Mark 4:2, and there it is at the close of the parable of the sower. You will meet with it again in Luke 8:18, still in connection with the same parable. The principle must be very important or else our Lord would not have taken care to have it recorded by three evangelists. And He must have intended that we should read it in the light of the parable or He would not have connected it therewith.

That parable was spoken in reference to the hearing of the word—and it is concerning the Word of God and its blessings that He says, "Whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even what he has."

To know the mind of the Spirit it is always wise to view a passage in its connection. This we do with the writings of men if we wish to understand them and reason itself teaches us to do likewise with the Word of God. Let us consider our text in its original connection. Each evangelist has given a shade of difference to his record.

In Matthew, where we take our text, the words stand in connection with the hearing of the Word—not any mode of hearing—but hearing itself. Read the ninth verse, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

There are some who hear not, for "their ears are dull of hearing." There are others of whom it is written, "Blessed are your ears, for they hear." Beloved, we must take care that we truly hear what we hear, for if we do not, we shall soon lose all power to hear. But if we hear the truth attentively and heartily, we shall be privileged to hear it yet more fully and to make larger profit by listening to it, even as our Lord says,

"He answered and said unto them, It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance."

Our Savior's first picture in the parable of the sower is that of the seed falling upon the wayside or the hard road. There was much traffic through the field—a footpath, which was trodden hard by many feet, ran from one end to the other and a handful of seed fell upon it. So the gospel falls upon men who are occupied with obstinacies, prejudices, pursuits, ambitions, cares and these have so much traffic through their minds that they are hardened towards the gospel and it never reaches the inner man, but lies upon the hard surface, a rejected thing. When they hear it, they do hear it and that is all. As the saying is, "It goes in one ear and out at the other." The truth never enters the man. They would not like to absent themselves from religious services altogether and yet they do much the same thing, for only their bodies are there—their hearts are far away, engaged with very different themes. They bring to the preacher ears which are sealed up and eyes which are curtained against the light. They see, but do not perceive. They hear, but do not understand. What is the sure result of this mimic hearing? The Savior in the parable pictures the birds of the air as taking away the seed which fell upon the roadside and devouring it—and He tells us by way of explanation that Satan comes and takes away the word, lest later it should obtain an entrance into the heart. Thus is the text fulfilled, "Whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even what he has." How many of our hearers are of this kind? They lose what they have because in very truth they never had it. Their attendance at worship is coming and going, coming and going and nothing more. Like a dog in and out of the fair, they have no business to do when they go to the house of God. They are no more the better by their going and coming than the door which swings on its hinges and turns in and turns out and then rests in its place. Such persons, like the wayside, do not receive anything and receiving nothing, they continue to receive nothing. Nay, they even go from bad to worse, for though they received nothing at first, they at least seemed to do so, but in due course even that seeming disappears. They become less likely to profit by the gospel and more and more hardened against it. While those who really do hear and drink in the truth become capable of hearing and understanding more—more mysteries are opened up to them, deeper truths are revealed and they perceive a greater sweetness and a more divine power in the Word of God. Those who do not receive the Word lose what little notional knowledge of the Word they once possessed. Though it may be the same preacher and the same preaching of the same doctrines, yet the results are very different—to those who have a part and a lot in the matter, the paths of the Lord drop fatness—while to careless, unbelieving hearers, the ministry becomes more dull every day till they cry out, "What a weariness it is." Satan is doing his work thoroughly and is taking away from the hard heart all desire towards the Word and all interest in it.

In Mark 4:25, our text is used in reference to the doctrine which is to be heard. The Savior, in the twenty-fourth verse says, "Take heed what you hear." I would press that important exhortation upon you all as most needful at this time. Nowadays people do not care what they hear. If a man can speak fluently, if he can be rhetorical and sensational, if he can tell many pretty stories, if he can use claptrap and bombast, he will have many hearers. Time was with our fathers when, if a man went half an inch astray as to orthodoxy, they would have none him. And though we would not have you so censorious, for we are not to make a man an offender for a word, yet we would have you jealous for the truth. If we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than that which you have received, I charge you listen not to it. Be the good sheep of the Good Shepherd, of whom it is written, "A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." The false shepherds try to charm you with their excellency of speech, but be deaf to their charms. False doctrine is a poisoned dish, however daintily it may be served. The false teachers would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect. But you know what the Savior said, "All that ever came before Me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them." "Take heed what you hear." A man cannot bear false doctrine long without being injured by it. He may at the first say, "I like the man, I admire his cleverness, although I dissent very much with what he says." This is treacherous ground to stand upon, for imperceptibly evil comes of it, "Their word does eat as does a canker." You cannot expose the soil of your heart to a continual sowing of tares but what some tare or other will take root and by-and-by, instead of having the good wheat growing in your soul, there will spring up the tares whose end is to be burned and you will have lost the harvest which should have been produced in your spirit. The wise man says, "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causes you to err from the words of knowledge." "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." "Be not carried about with many and strange doctrines, for it is good that the heart be established with grace." Therefore, take heed what you hear.

There are many who, when they hear the gospel, are, according to our Lord's second picture, mere superficial hearers. They take some heed to their hearing, but not to what they have heard, for if they regarded the value and dignity of the Word, they would take it more thoroughly to heart and it would permanently affect their lives. These are they who receive the Word in stony places. When the gospel comes to them they catch at it without much consideration—they are hot and eager for it and rejoice because it has come in their way, "And with joy they receive it." They sing and shout at once, "Happy day! Happy day! This is the gospel for me. I have found peace and heaven and will never be anxious again." These people have not counted the cost or weighed the truth or entered into its inner meaning and spiritual certainty. There has been no repentance of sin, no sense of guilt, no humbling before God, no brokenness of spirit, no inner conflict, and no work of the Holy Spirit in the soul. It has all been a sort of happy-go-lucky business in which they caught at what came in their way and promised

them fair. They will soon fling away that which they have so inconsiderately embraced—when the sun is up, the plant which has no root will wither—when persecution arises, the unregenerated convert will be offended. Our Savior warns us against this in the language of the text. If you truly receive what you hear, you shall have more, for unto everyone that has, more shall be given and he shall have abundance. But if, like the stony ground, you never really have the seed, but simply allow it to sprout in the surface-soil which conceals the rock of your unrenewed nature, then under trial you will lose what you have—the sprouting of the grain so prematurely will only end in an equally rapid withering and all will be gone. Oh, my dear hearers, be sincere and solid in all things. Believe what you believe and take care that what you believe is worth believing and is the very truth of the living God. Let it sink deep into your soul and take root there. I pray you do not espouse religion as a man puts on his coat to take it off again—let it be woven into the woof and warp of your being. Let it be part and parcel of yourselves, running like a thread through all your thoughts, desires, and aims, so that if anything else of yourselves should be torn away, yet it would be impossible to tear away from you the blessed gospel because it is in and of you—a component part of your truest selves. If you thus receive the gospel and give it root-hold, you shall know more and more of its blessings. But if you do not thus receive it, but leave it to a rootless sprouting of mere surface religion, it shall be taken away from you when trouble and persecution arise.

In Luke 8:18, this grand principle is used in reference to taking heed how we hear. Our Lord said, "Take heed therefore how you hear. For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever has not, from him shall be taken even that which he seems to have." Many are attentive to the gospel and they have some discernment and will not listen to what is unsound, so that they regard what they hear and yet they have small consideration for how they hear it—and that especially on one point. The suitable way to hear the gospel is to give it full and entire possession of the heart. The gospel is exclusive. It will not be one of two masters. I would have you, my brethren, be among "the exclusive brethren" in a very excellent and admirable sense of the term. Our Savior gives us a picture of the non-exclusives, who are set forth as the seed sown among thorns. The soil received the good seed after a fashion and then it received the nettles and the thorns. And these nettles and thorns and wheat all began to grow together—a happy family, some would say—but a devil's garden is nearer the truth. In these days, such a garden is projected on a large scale by some of our public writers and speakers. The church and the world are to become one—and saints and sinners are to blend together in one universal round of play-going. We are actually urged by persons who suppose themselves to be Christians, to renew the old league which was established in the days of Noah and brought on the Flood—when the sons of God and the daughters of men joined in alliance because the sons of God thought that they should greatly improve the world by uniting with it. At this time, we are told that it is wrong on our part to forsake the debasing amusements of the ungodly, for if we would join in them, we might im-

prove their tone and quality. If heaven would go down to hell, hell would be greatly improved. See how benevolent Satan has turned and how anxious to be reformed.

Hear the voice of God which runs in another manner, "Come you out from among them. Be you separate and touch not the unclean thing." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Beware of religious play-going and pious theatricals, for they are a snare into which only the vain and foolish will fall. Let thorns be thorns and let not wheat attempt to grow among them. See that plot of ground? How charming is its aspect—wheat springing up with its green blades among the thorns and thistles! Is it not a delightful compromise? What was the end of this conglomeration? Why, the wheat died—it was choked and could not grow in such uncongenial society. Know you this, that if you receive Christ you must cast out the love of the world? Christ will be *aut Caesar aut nullus*—either King or nobody. He will have the whole of our heart or none of it. We must altogether give ourselves up to His influence and to His sway, for if we set up another king and say to him, "You shall reign and Christ shall reign, too," Christ will not have it. He will up and away, for His jealousy will not endure a rival and His sovereignty will not tolerate a consort. Take care, then, how you hear the gospel. Hear it, knowing it to be the only Word which can save your souls. Receive it into your being to become everything to you, for if you do not, there shall be taken away from you that gospel which you think you have, since you have not afforded it the reception which it demands and deserves. If you say to sin and self and all else, "Be gone! My heart is for Christ alone. This good seed must not be cumbered with such weeds as you are," then the truth is in you and shall be more and more fully apparent within you, bringing forth fruit abundantly after its kind.

In the connection with this parable, then, the sum and substance of our text is this—the Word must dwell in us truly and then it will dwell in us richly. But if it enter not in very deed into the heart, we shall lose it altogether before long. The Jewish people heard Christ preach the gospel and because never man spoke as He did, they listened to Him, but they did never receive His word, for they understood not His meaning. They only caught at the symbols under which He couched the sacred mysteries, but the mysteries themselves they knew not. Consequently, after a little while, they grew angry with the divine messenger of the covenant. They persecuted Him and hounded Him to death. While He gave them loaves and fishes and there was something to be got by hearing, they hung upon His lips in crowds—but when He offered them no longer any other food than the bread of heaven, then they straightway lifted up the heel against Him and would have none of Him. In consequence of this, the preaching of the Word ceased among them. The apostles turned to the Gentiles, who gladly received the truth and the Jewish nation was left in blindness, in which, alas, it abides unto this day. The same is constantly happening among us now. Men hear the gospel, but they do not receive it into their hearts and therefore after awhile they grow weary of it—they are tired of being perpetually reminded of a danger in which they do not believe and of

being invited to a feast which they despise—and therefore they turn upon their heels and go. If, from force of habit, they remain, the gospel seems to have lost all power over them and they have no appreciation of its ministry. What they once had is taken from them because they never truly had it—they are blinded by the light which they refused to see, choked by the morsels which ought to have been their food, and cast down to hell by the stone on which they should have mounted to heaven. He who receives gets more. He who does not receive, loses what he seemed to have. There is no standing still—there is a necessary movement one way or other. In this business, a man daily grows richer or poorer. This is no stagnant sea. The current bears all vessels onward either to the fair havens or to the black sea of eternal ruin. Here stands the inevitable decree—he who has shall have—he who is a mere pretender and has not, shall lose even his power to seem to have.

II. Let this suffice. And now, dear friends, let us try and bring out the same principle IN REFERENCE TO THE EXPERIENCE OF ALL GRACIOUS SOULS. Our experience verifies the truth of the text, "Whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance."

In the world among men it is commonly observed that it never rains but it pours. Where you see a sheep there is generally a flock. Money makes money. Poverty remains poor. Lack of capital brings bankruptcy. A company starts on imaginary or borrowed capital—it makes a fuss and a noise, but it never prospers. By-and-by it breaks up and all is lost—and yet it never had anything of its own to lose. Thus it verifies to the letter the truth—whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that he has. Ordinarily, prosperity is a hen which likes to lay where there is a nest egg and when one swallow of success comes, others will follow it. Certainly we have found it so in the things of grace—where grace has been given, more grace comes. Spiritual capital well worked multiplies the stock and spiritual wealth is realized where there is a solid base to begin upon. Let us give instances.

When a man believes the gospel in its most elementary form, that man will soon be taught the higher truths. When we begin with some people by telling them the plain way of salvation, they raise doubts and quibbles. "But" is their favorite word. They cry, "I cannot see this and I cannot understand that." We never thought they would see it or understand it, for they generally desire to understand the most difficult parts of the gospel first, like a man who must needs stand on the top of Mont Blanc before he has reached the valley at its base. Imagine the folly of such a conversation as this, "Here are your letters, my child. This letter is A." "Sir, I cannot learn A B C, for as yet I cannot read a single line of Homer's Iliad." "Come then, my child, and learn the multiplication table." "Alas, sir, I cannot do it, for I am not yet acquainted with differential calculus." Surely the child mocks us and is unwilling to learn. The elements can be mastered, although the higher grades of study have not been reached. Half the difficulties of unbelievers are the result of unreadiness to be taught. When a man says, "I understand very little, but I know that I am a sinner and I perceive that Christ came into the world to save sinners, therefore I will trust Him to save me," that man has something and he shall have more. When a seeker

confesses, "I am very foolish and slow of comprehension, but I perceive that I need a new heart and that the Spirit of God alone can renew me and therefore I seek to Him for His grace"—then it is clear that he has some belief and to him shall be given so that he shall have more abundance. If you are struggling with unbelief, be willing to believe what you can believe—have a will towards believing. Dear friend, if you cannot yet follow the Lord into the depths, He will save you if you follow Him into the shallows as far as you can. If you are staggered by any one truth, do not therefore reject your Lord, but be willing to accept that which does not stagger you. Touch the hem of His garment if you cannot reach His divine person and you shall soon find that your faith in the elementary truths of the gospel will, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, lead you to an understanding of the deeper mysteries. Use your starlight and you shall have sunlight soon.

As it is with faith so is it with the possession of any real, genuine grace. Take repentance for instance. A man may say, "My heart is hard and I cannot repent as I would." No, my dear friend, but do you really hate evil and do you labor to avoid the faults into which you formerly fell? Do you mourn and regret mistakes and errors and transgressions of which you are convinced? Well, then, this repentance of yours will deepen—you will come to be very sensitive one of these days and you will chasten yourself even for a sinful thought. Though now you cannot reach the sensitiveness which you long for, yet, if your repentance is real, though it is weak at first, to him that has shall be given and your repentance shall grow. If there is in your heart an evident love of sin, it is idle for you to hope that your repentance will increase, for you have none. Your green bay tree is not the weeping willow and will never grow into one, however much it may spread. But the least twig of the willow, if planted by the watercourses, will be sure to flourish.

Take faith, again. If you really believe in Jesus Christ and look only to Him for salvation, that faith, though it is very weak, will become strong. If it is there at all it will wax great in the soul. But if you say, "I think I believe," and yet you really do not believe, you will never grow in faith. In fact, the faith you think you have will, in the day of trouble, altogether vanish and you will find yourself in despair. If you will really trust my Lord and Master, though your faith is but as a grain of mustard seed, yet if it is real, you shall have more and more till your faith can move mountains and pluck up trees. It is God's plan to add more to the first little deposit of faith, even as a master builder adds stone to stone till the structure is complete.

It is so with love to God. Who among us loves God as he would wish to love Him? We sigh out—

"Yes, I love You and adore,
Oh, for grace to love You more."

But, beloved, the point you have to watch is not so much the possession of the flaming love of a Samuel Rutherford or a Madame Guyon, as the making sure of even the lowest degree of genuine love to Jesus. See that it is true even if it is feeble. A spark of fire is true fire and is quite enough to begin with. It turns everything with which it comes in contact into its own nature and it spreads by the force of its own in-

tensity. The same is true of love. If you have real fire, it will burn, but if you have only a painted fire, it will not increase. A painted love of Christ, by which I mean the mere imitation of love to Him, will not increase, but will eventually disappear altogether. See that you truly love Jesus. I implore and beseech you to mind this. Do not fake love, but feel love. Give Him your whole heart, for lip love is mockery. How can you say, I love you, when your heart is not with me?

It is the same with zeal for God's glory—we are none of us as zealous as we ought to be for Christ—but the way to get to be flamingly zealous for His name is to be truly zealous at the first. If you desire His glory, though that desire is faint, it will become more and more intense. If you feel that you must live to praise Him, if you desire to be made willing, even, to die to praise Him, you will before long feel seraphic zeal. True grace must grow—there is no fear about its increase. If the bulb of the lily is really alive, the fair flower will crown its stem before long. But if it is a dead bulb to start with, you may place it in the best soil and water it every moment, but nothing will come of it. A seed may be so small that you can scarcely see it and yet if it is a living seed, none can tell how much it will develop. But if it is one of those dead seeds, which are far too plentifully mixed up with the seedsman's parcels, you may do what you will with it but its only change will be decay. You see, then, that where there is true grace, we should not despise the day of small things, but look for more grace and a grander display of the divine power.

The way in which the promise of the text is carried out by our gracious God is worthy of observation. "Whoever has, to him shall be given." If this is connected with the parable of the sower it becomes clear that God gives more by a process of growth and then, turning the truth the other way, we see that all growth in grace is still the gift of God and we should not forget that it is so. If you have any faith, if you are to grow strong, the same grace that gave you your first confidence in Christ must give you more. It is quite true that there is a growing power about the inner life, but its growing power is dependent upon the immediate working of God upon it. If He were to cease to communicate more grace, the new life must cease to grow. Well says the apostle, "He gives more grace." You grow, but that growth is God's gift and you must look to Him for it.

Why didn't the Lord give us the largest measure of grace to begin with—why promise more abundance as an after result? I think it is because we value grace all the more when it comes to us little by little. Again, it is to our good to be exercised to get more grace. A poor woman is allowed to go and glean in a field. Your generosity might say, "Come, my good woman, I will give you the corn and you shall not have the trouble of gleaning," but this might not be so good a thing for her as to allow her to gather the wheat by her own efforts. It is often much better to enable the poor to help themselves than to help them without their own exertions. God is wise towards us—He means to give us the corn, but He decides that we shall glean it and so exercise ourselves unto godliness. We are to become rich in grace, but it is to be by heavenly trading. Growth is a gift—remember that. God's grace is received,

not as a dead external thing, but as a living outgrowth and for outgrowth there must be inner life.

You, then, who hope that you have a little genuine grace in your souls, may well take courage. Let the truth contained in the text cheer you—unto you shall more be given and you shall have more abundance. Do not think because you have but little faith you are always to be doubting and trembling. You shall grow out of it, my brother, my sister, as your faith becomes established. Do not suppose that because your hands have been weak and your knees have been trembling, they are always to be so. We are not always to be infants in arms—we are daily nearing fullness of stature. You are very glad to have little ones at home. They may be dear tiny babies, but you are not at all dissatisfied with their being so little, seeing it is right that they should be. A babe of six months is not expected to be very tall. You are pleased to have a son though he is little—you even admire his littleness. But suppose your child should live twenty years and should still remain a babe in stature? You would be sorely distressed and say, "Surely my child is a dwarf. What a sad thing that my boy should be so deformed." You young beginners need not mind being little—we expect you to be so—but it does not do for you older folks who have been Christians these twenty years to be babes still, for, if so, we shall begin to be afraid that you are not a child of the Lord's own family, for divine life grows. A dead post which we saw in the ground twenty years ago is the same post still, no bigger, no smaller and only altered by becoming rotten underground. But the tree which you saw twenty years ago—what a difference there is in it. It was then a sapling which you could bend, but now it has become as an iron pillar and there is no moving it. So ought it to be with us and we must aspire to have it so. May God the Holy Spirit work it in us, for Jesus' sake.

The main point, however, to come to is this—have we really obtained the first living principle? Have we the heavenly seed really in our souls? I cannot preach to you at this time as I should like because it is not so much a subject for discourse as for personal use. O for a discerning eye to look through a window right into the heart of each one of you. The most of you profess to be the people of God, but are you really so? I have no reason to suspect you—have you any reason to suspect yourselves? You were converted, you say, but was it conversion or not? You say, "I do believe in Jesus," but is it that real faith which hangs alone upon Him? You know a person may be a long time a professor and not find out that he has deceived himself even for scores of years—and I am afraid that there are some who will never open their eyes to their willful self-deceit till they find themselves in hell when that discovery will come too late. Oh do not let us go on increasing the number of the church without duly searching ourselves to see whether we truly belong to the number of the faithful. A prince may get his treasury full of shining stones, but what if they should all turn out to be paste gems? A collector of coins might accumulate a multitude of them—there are dealers who will gratify his taste and supply him with an endless number of counterfeits—but if a master of the science should look over his treasures and condemn them as mere shams,

what a disappointment would befall him! Brethren and sisters, let us each one put himself into the test house—let us ask the Lord to search us lest we be found destitute of grace. To him that has, more shall be given and if we have not true grace, it shall not be given to us—but we shall even lose what we have.

III. I must now mournfully conclude with THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TRUTH AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE EXPERIENCE OF THE INSINCERE. Insincere men and women find that what they had is taken away from them. I will illustrate this point very rapidly. It is in this way.

Many who hear the gospel have been brought up to do so from their childhood. But if they do not heartily receive the gospel, they in many instances give up attendance upon the outward means of grace when they get away from the restraints of religious society. They find it dull work to sit so long and listen to drowsy prayers and dull preaching. They find it uncomfortable to get into crowded congregations, cold to be in small ones, and unhealthy to sit in the close atmosphere of a meeting house. They see many faults in the service and grumble quite cleverly. At first they stay away one part of the day. Once is quite enough for them, they say—they cannot stand twice. Then, by-and-by, every excuse is made for staying at home. Sometimes it is wet. At another time they feel a little out of sorts. These things would not keep them from business, but a very little suffices to excuse a man's staying at home on Sunday. At length they do not go at all. Thus there is taken away from them what they really did not have—they did not really hear and now they do not nominally hear. There are thousands of people in London at home today, hardly dressed even at this hour, from whom is taken away all wish to hear the gospel.

Here is another form of the same thing. The man keeps on hearing, but not having received the gospel, he loses all power to appreciate it. "I do not know what has come over our minister," he says, "I used to at one time feel something when he was preaching, but it is not so now. He is getting old and has about spun himself out." Other people do not think so, however, for they have been converted and blessed under his ministry. What has happened? Why, this man has lost what he seemed to have, namely, the power to appreciate the gospel. He remembers the day when he used to stand in the aisles all the time, longing to catch every syllable, and then would go home and get on his knees and after a fashion, pray for mercy. Nothing affects him now. Tremble, my hearers, if that is your case, for you are going fast to perdition, with nothing to stop you. You are dying at the root and will continue to lose all sensation until death ends in corruption.

In certain persons this takes yet another form. They received the grace of God in a way and there was an effect produced upon them, but it all disappeared. I have seen an unconverted man admirably reformed for a time by hearing the Word. The drunkard's cup has been given up and foul language has ceased. There has been a great moral improvement for which we have all been very glad. But, alas, it has not lasted. Unless gospel work is inward heart-work—if it merely lies in external reformation—the man often goes back to be worse than he was before. The evil spirit which had left him, returns and takes with it

seven other spirits more wicked than itself. And they enter in and dwell there and the last end of that man is worse than the first. If the gospel does not save you, it may in the end even make you worse. If it is not a savor of life unto life, it will become a savor of death unto death.

One more version of this same truth and I have done. Some appear to receive the Word even farther than those in whom it produces an external reformation, for they make a confession of faith in Christ. They pray and perhaps they preach. Their voices are heard in Christian assemblies and they appear to live the lives of Christians. I have seen them even become eminent for supposed sanctity, but if they have not the Word really and truly received, what a miserable life theirs must be! They do not get the secret comfort of true religion and yet they have to keep up an appearance of it. Surely the poorest people in the world are those who have to keep up appearances and have not the means to do it with—they are always getting in debt and yet have to look everybody in the face. I always pity a penniless nobleman, the Earl of Nowhere, Lord Lackland. Many professors are in the same plight—they have a name to live and are dead. They do not really believe what they profess to believe. They have a shrewd suspicion that all is not right within and hence they get no comfort from all their religious talking and doing. It is a task, a dreary, cheerless task. They have no proof in their own hearts of the truth of the gospel, for they lack the internal evidence which is the best of all. Their religion has never changed them, nor stirred the deeps of their being, and at last it becomes impossible to keep up the imposture. Just as with a man who continues to live beyond his means, there comes a time when he must be bankrupt and so there comes a time with the spiritual deceiver when he cannot keep it up any longer. Look at Judas. He sold his soul for thirty pieces of silver and a rope—that was his way out of his profession. Others have become grosser skeptics and viler haters of Christ than others—their hypocrisy has curdled into blasphemy. Others have settled down in utter indifference, callousness, and carelessness and have slept themselves into hell. Where the cheat is kept up till the end, what a waking awaits the deceiver! When he will have to go from the hearing of the gospel to the howling of the lost—from his pew in the house of God to his place in hell. When he will have to be dragged away from the cup of the Lord to drink in very deed the cup of devils—when he will be shut out from the association of the saints to dwell forever with the condemned. When that the God whom he professed to worship shall reject him and when Jesus Himself shall say, “I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity.” God save us from such a doom, for His sake. Amen.

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NO. 1489

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 10, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

(When the regular congregation unanimously left their seats to be occupied by strangers, who crowded the building to its utmost capacity).

"Whatever prayer and supplication is made by anyone, or by all Your people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: then hear in heaven, Your dwelling place, and pardon, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart You know; (for You, even You only, know the hearts of all the children of men) that they may fear You all the days that they live in the land which You gave unto our fathers."
1 Kings 8:38-40.

YOU all know that the temple at Jerusalem was the one place of sacrifice throughout all the holy land, for thus had the Lord spoken, "Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you, that offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, and brings it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer it unto the Lord: even that man shall be cut off from among his people." According to God's law there was one altar and it was counted a high crime when the tribes which dwelt beyond Jordan built another. And their brethren besought them, saying, "Rebel not against the Lord in building an altar beside the altar of the Lord our God" (Jos 22:19). As there was only one high priest, so there was only one altar and sacrifice might not be offered anywhere else but on that altar at Jerusalem. Hence, when a man wished to present his offerings to God, he went up to the one temple which Solomon dedicated by the prayer in which our text occurs. The people did afterwards build altars on high hills and in green groves, but these places, and the sacrifices offered there, were contrary to the mind of God. There was but one altar and one sacrifice, and that was at the temple. Hence when the godly Israelite prayed, he looked towards the one place of sacrifice, not in superstition, but in believing remembrance of the one sacrifice and the one altar and the one glorious token of the divine presence which shone over the Mercy Seat within the veil. He knew that God could only accept him through the one sacrifice and therefore he looked that way.

The people especially looked toward the temple in prayer in times of national calamity. In drought, or when the crops were consumed by locusts or by caterpillars, or when blast and mildew destroyed the hope of harvest, or in

time of war or pestilence, their supplications were presented unto the one Jehovah, all eyes looking towards His one sacred shrine where the one sacrifice smoked upon the altar. But although there were those special opportunities and God heard His people's cry as a nation, it is very pleasant to observe that He regarded the griefs of individuals. Every man, says the text, that knew the plague of his own heart, was to spread forth his hands towards that one place of sacrifice and pray, and God would forgive him and deliver him. That is my subject tonight. The Lord will hear whatsoever prayer and supplication is made by any man in reference to his own personal affliction, if his heart is turned towards God's own temple.

But what is that temple? And where is it? There are now no material temples beneath the whole heaven unless the bodies of believers may be so called and no one thinks of looking to them. No, "The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands." No one place is more sacred than another—

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

There remains one temple, however, and that is the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is temple, altar, and sacrifice, and if you would look the right way in prayer, and if you desire your prayers to speed, you must look to Him by the eye of faith. See, there He sits at the right hand of God. Having finished the one sacrifice and made atonement for sin forever, there He sits—Priest, altar, offering, temple, and every true supplicant must enter into the holiest by His blood, "by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." Whoever beneath the wide heavens is conscious of the plague of his own heart or has anything that plagues him or anything that troubles him, he may turn his eyes towards Christ, the true temple, with a certainty that God will hear his prayer and answer his request and send him deliverance. "We have an altar," and that altar is our Lord's own blessed person. We have but one and we tremble for those who set up another—and to that one we look with confident hope, being assured that the sacrifice once offered there has made our peace with God and procured acceptance for our supplications—

"We rear no altar—You have died.
We deck no priestly shrine.
What need have we of creature-aid?
The power to save is Thine."

But now I must come nearer to the point in hand. The text speaks of "every man which shall know the plague of his own heart." I am going to talk to you about that knowledge and the plague with which it deals.

These are home affairs that we shall speak of tonight—not matters beyond our line and unpractical—but our own personal concerns. "Every man the plague of his own heart." A great many men think they know the plague of other people's hearts and there is a great deal of talk in the world about this family, that person and the other. I pray you let the scandals of the hour alone and think of your own evils. This night let each man consider his own home affairs and not other people's business. He would be a bad farmer who plowed other people's lands and left his own untilled. He would be a poor gardener

who used his hoe on other men's weeds and not on his own. Tonight I pray you, let each man think of home affairs. Yes, and let him think of heart affairs, for whatever may be wrong about us, the worst place to have anything wrong is the heart. Out of it are the issues of life. We can endure the burdens of life, but "a wounded spirit, who can bear?" A plague in the body is not half so bad as a plague in the heart—a plague in the soul—of all plagues the plague of the heart is the worst. It is not the plague of another man's heart which I have to think of tonight, but the plague of my own heart, for the text speaks of knowing, "Every man the plague of his own heart."

It is a dreadful mischief that there should be a plague in the heart, for a plague is a dreadful thing. A plague means, first, something which brings pain and there is many a secret heartache in this world where we least suspect it. If you could take the roofs off the houses of London, strange sights would be seen. But if once you could proceed to put a window into every heart, some of those whose faces look gladdest would appear to us to be among the most miserable of men. The plague of the heart means pain, care, worry, grief, and trouble of mind. But it means more than that, for the plague is a disease. Now, a diseased heart is something terrible. Often we see it reported that a man died suddenly of disease of the heart, which I suppose frequently means that the doctors do not know what he died of—but certainly, anything that kills the heart is a disease in a most important organ. The hand may be cured, or we may even lose it and live—but when the heart is affected, the whole system gets out of gear and life itself verges dangerously upon the edge of death. As it is with the heart of the body, so is it with the soul's heart—its depravity or in other words, its moral disease—puts all the faculties out of order and ruins our whole nature. Nothing can be right with the immortal nature till the heart is cured of the plague which came upon it through the Fall. The worst point about the plague of the heart is the fact that if it is not removed, it will ultimately bring death upon the soul. Plague at the heart is mortal and I am much surprised if I have not in this great congregation some who have a present pain, a present disease of the heart and who will—unless God of His grace, lead them to adopt the cure we shall set before them tonight—perish through this deadly plague. O that while I am speaking to you the Holy Spirit may lead many a sin-sick soul to breathe out some such desire as that expressed by John Newton when he wrote—

"Physician of my sin-sick soul,
To You! I bring my case;
My raging malady control,
And heal me by Your grace.
Pity the anguish I endure,
See how I mourn and pine.
For never can I hope a cure
From any hand but Thine.
Lord, I am sick, regard my cry,
And set my spirit free.
Say, can You let a sinner die,
Who longs to live for Thee?"

To come to close quarters. Our first point will be *forms of this plague.* The next will be *mode of treatment* and the third will be *help to be expected*.

I. First, let us mention various FORMS OF THIS PLAGUE OF THE HEART. They are very many, perhaps almost as many as there are hearts themselves. Some have this plague of the heart in the form of a terrible memory. With blood-red lines, remorse has scored their memories in an ineffaceable manner. We need not go into particulars—a secret something known scarcely to anyone but themselves hides away in the most tender part of their nature and eats away at their vitals. They sinned—sinned terribly—and the sin haunts them. They could be happy if they could forget, but that one sin is ever before them as though a blood spot were painted on their very eyeballs. They are reminded of it by the simplest events, for it seems as though God had put an accusing tongue into the stones they tread upon and the walls which surround them. Even their beds refuse them repose. They wake in the darkness and sit in speechless horror, or if they fall asleep, the visions of the night scare them. Few know of their fault and yet they imagine that they are universally suspected. Nobody has cried shame upon them, but they cry shame upon themselves. It may not be one sin alone, but perhaps all their sins in one pack bay at them and pursue them like bloodhounds eager to devour. They can hear the voice of their sins above all notes of music or shouts of laughter. When they would be quiet and at rest, they cannot be for they are tossed to and fro like ocean in a storm. They have the plague of remembered sin upon them and see no remedy for it. Tonight it is my gladsome message that there is a cure for this form of heart-plague—an effectual cure. Transgression can be blotted out, even the greatest trespass can be altogether forgiven. Sin can be put away so that it shall not be mentioned against you any more nor ever. Blessed be God for this. If this is the plague of your heart, have confidence and embrace the cure tonight.

With others it takes another shape. Their heart-plague has assumed the form of *dissatisfaction and unrest*. They cannot be quiet. They are like the troubled sea which cannot rest. They were a little pleased at one time when they had a new scheme on hand to divert their thoughts and amuse their minds. The scheme has prospered, but that prosperity has brought them no contentment—they must now be at something else—and while the new plan is in full swing, they will, a little, forget, but when that also is accomplished, they will sit down and cry, "What next? I am sick of all things and most of all of myself. Life is worry and disappointment. I cannot be quiet. I crave a something, I know not what." There are hundreds and thousands of men who have all that heart can wish and yet are miserable. On the other hand, I could point you to many hundreds who have but little in this world and yet are almost as happy as the angels, in full contentment rejoicing in their God. The plague in the heart rages fiercely in those who lack nothing except the power to enjoy what they have. They have succeeded in their learning and gained their degree, but increased learning has only enlarged the sphere of their disquietude. They have succeeded in business and have retired, but retirement is a weariness to them. They have prospered in everything and this has become their adversity.

Like the man of old, they cry, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!" They mourn over all earthly good, saying, "There is nothing in it. It is an empty thing. Woe is me! Where is rest for my soul?" Again, it is my glad errand tonight to tell you where perfect rest and sweet contentment can be found—where your soul shall dwell at ease and possess the earth and inherit worlds to come—and your peace shall be like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. The Lord God, the Holy Spirit, help you to avail yourselves of the blessed peace stored up in the one great sacrifice which every unresting heart may have if it will only come to Him.

This plague takes another shape and I mention several that I may come home to many hearts and depict many experiences. In many it is a wretched tendency to some one sin which, nevertheless, the man in his better moments does not wish to commit. Some are horribly plagued by their passions. They stand out against them occasionally and come to a pause and resolve, "It shall not be. In the name of everything that is good, it shall not be." They hate and despise themselves for it and yet they yield to overwhelming lust and are hurried forward by their passions like dried leaves in the tempest or spray dashed aloft by a storm.

Many individuals are plagued with the temptation to strong drink. They vow that they will abstain, but the serpent stings—they thirst for the firewater and will have it though it degrades their manhood below the level of the swine. With others, wantonness and chambering have gained the mastery and the plague is foul indeed. With another class it is ungovernable anger, quickness of wrath, or that slow-burning, smoldering fire called malice which is nearest akin to the fire of hell. Better burn with a life-long fever than be the prey of these fierce heats. Some know the evil which twines about them like a python. They wish to resist it and yet they are so fascinated by the sin that they cannot tear away the serpent folds. Many are as though they were taken in a net or garmented about with lusts till they are comparable to Hercules of old when he put on the tunic which burned into his flesh and clung to his body—so that when he labored to tear it off as best he could—he tore away his flesh with it. Many are enshrouded in a horrible robe of habit which has become a part of their being, the very skin of their souls. They cannot get rid of that awful tunic of fire—a tendency to sin. To them also I have the joy to proclaim, in the name of God the all-merciful, that from this they can be redeemed. They can be delivered from the bondage of corruption and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

In others, this plague of the heart is a wretched indecision—a perpetual vacillation. They are resolved at times, but their resolve ends in nothing. Oh, there are numbers of men who know it themselves—that they can never succeed in life because they are "everything by turns and nothing long." Especially in matters of religion they wax and wane like the moon. Today they repent. Tomorrow they return to their sin. Today they are in earnest. Tomorrow they are careless. Today they are almost persuaded to be Christians. Tomorrow they are quite persuaded to find pleasure in sin. False as the waves and fickle as the winds, they are never long enough in one place to take root anywhere. Unstable as

water, they shall not excel. Who can heal them of this moral palsy? Can nothing decide them in the right direction? Yes, there is One who can decide them. There is One who can throw the weight of His sweet love into the quivering balance and make it turn in the right direction. O hesitating mortal, if you have grace to look tonight towards the one Sacrifice, the Holy Spirit will root you and ground you in love—Jesus will make a steadfast man of you and you shall yet say, "O God, my heart is fixed. My heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise."

I have known this plague of the heart in some to take the form *of a mournful hardness*, so that they cry, "I would, but cannot, repent. I would feel, but I cannot feel. I seem to be given up, seared as with a hot iron and insensible." This is a fearful plague—perhaps worse than all I have previously mentioned because more fatal. Is there, then, no hope? Yes, there is One who can make the dead to live, who can take away the heart of stone and give a heart of flesh and it is His name we preach tonight, the name of Jesus who shall save His people from their sins.

There are others whom I meet pretty constantly who have a *faintness of heart*, a despondency of spirit and this is their plague. They cannot believe that there is mercy for them. They cannot hope that they could live a new life. At times they feel a desire to turn unto the Lord, but they think it is impossible and that grim impossibility drives them back from Christ and forward to yet grosser sin. Many a man has said, "Because there is no hope, therefore will I sin to the very length of my tether. I cannot be saved and so I may as well have the pleasures of sin to the full." I pray, dear hearer, let not despair thus saddle you and ride you, for there is no cause for it. There is salvation where Jesus comes and He comes here tonight. No man need say he is denied a hope since Christ came into the word to seek and to save that which is lost. Oh, my hearer, hope as long as you live. To the very confines of death's dominions and to the borders of hell-shade, let this word of mercy fly, "There is hope. There is hope." For the most hopeless, there is still hope. "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."

One other form of heart-plague is a *constant dread of the future*. Multitudes of persons are always under apprehension and especially under apprehension of death. You must not mention death in some places, the very word is horrible. Some would like, I dare say, that the etiquette of the age should respect their coward fears and be as daintily absurd as that of the French monarch who would not allow death to be mentioned in his presence, and when his secretary read the words, "the death of the king of Spain," he sharply asked, "What is that? What is that?" in anger, that such a thing should be mentioned in his sacred presence. The secretary was obliged to say that it was a circumstance which occasionally happened to kings in Spain. Scores of people would like us to be just as delicate as that upon the subject of their end. But O sirs, you must die. The youngest among us who is in best health will die—may die soon—but where the snows of winter lie upon your heads and where already

the tenement begins to crumble through old age, death must come. Are you not prepared, my friend? Are you not prepared? Then I do not wonder that you tremble at the very thought of being summoned before your Maker's bar. But be not as the ostrich which hides its silly head from the hunter and then dreams of being secure. Learn to look death in the face, for it will soon stare you out of countenance. Do you call yourself a Christian and are you afraid to die? Oh! if God had made you such a man as you ought to be, you would not dread to die, for death is a mere undressing to the true believer, an undressing which leads to his being arrayed in glory. Death to the saint is the gate of endless joy and shall he dread to enter there? To such as are in Christ who have looked to the one temple, to the one sacrifice, to the one Priest, to the one altar, the fear of death is gone. Within them God has worked such a work and for them Christ has prepared such a heaven that without apprehension they may look through the gates of pearl and often clap their hands for very joy as they sing—

"See that glory, how resplendent!
Brighter far than fancy paints.
There in majesty transcendent,
Jesus reigns, the King of saints.
Spread my wings, my soul, and fly
Straight to yonder world of joy."

So elevated is the joyous experience of the true believer that death to him would be unmingled gain. He knows it to be so and therefore at times he is even in haste to be gone.

Have I, in any of these descriptions, picked you out tonight my dear friend? Have you a heart-plague like any of these? Or is it some other form of the great spiritual pestilence? I cannot tarry to describe it, for now I want to speak upon the mode of *treatment*. May the Holy Spirit help you to feel the plague and accept the remedy upon the spot.

II. You desire to get rid of this heart-plague—effectually rid of it—let us consider, then, the MODE OF TREATMENT which will work a cure. I hope you are not so foolish as to say, "I shall not think about the matter, for it would only plague me more." That is a very bad habit and only such as a frivolous or a wicked person would follow. A man is in a trade and he says to his clerk, "Don't bring me the books. I do not want to know anything about my accounts. Don't let me see my book or ledger. I had rather not be troubled with them." The confidential clerk replies, "Sir, I think you ought to see your account at the bank." "No," answers the silly one, "I should not like to be perplexed with figures and balances and losses and deficits. I should not enjoy my dinner if I attended to these matters—let us drive dull care away and enjoy life while we may. Don't worry me. Keep those wretched books away." I do not think it needs a prophet to foretell that this tradesman will soon be in his creditors' hands with very small assets. By such avoidance of knowing his position, he will be ruined as sure as doomsday. And whenever a man dares not look into the state of his own soul and dreads a half-an-hour alone, he may conclude that there is something rotten in the state of Denmark—something far, far gone with regard to his soul's estate. He need not question that, I think. But let

us not be so unwise, for the first mode of treatment we prescribe tonight, in order to the remedy, is that every man should know the plague of his own heart, that is to say, he should *endeavor to get a true and accurate knowledge of his spiritual condition as in the sight of God.*

What is this sin that troubles you? Honestly look at it. What is this fear that haunts you? Do you know what it is? I would advise you to write it down and see it in black and white. What is this tendency to sin that enslaves you? What is this wretched indecision? Get a diagnosis of the disease and be sure it is a correct one. Look your own case through and through. It very much helps towards salvation when a man knows something of his need of it—and he will be very much helped to a sense of his need if he will impartially examine his own state. Might I ask such a thing—I fear it would not be granted, but I am sure good would come of it if I could get it—that every person tonight on his going home would sit down in his chamber, look into the state of his heart before God and then write on a piece of paper one of two words—"saved" or "lost." My friend, do not write that word "saved," unless you can honestly and sincerely say, "I have looked to the Savior and He has saved me." But suppose you are forced, in honesty to your conscience, to write down the word "lost," as your true description? It will be both manly and useful to do so. I have known this to be done in cases in which, before the morning light, that piece of paper has been burned and another word has been written in its stead—even the bright consoling word "saved." Only foolish people object to inquiry as to their state—be not one of them. Write down the condition of your soul. Take stock and make sure. Write down "impenitent," if you are so. Put it before you in black and white. Write "unbelieving," if you are so. It cannot hurt you to know the truth and it may be of lasting benefit to you. We prescribe that to begin with.

Then, next, as Solomon bade those who knew the plague of their own heart turn their eyes to the great sacrifice at the temple, the next thing to do is to *turn your eye to God.* You cannot help yourself and nobody on earth can help you. Your case, apart from divine grace, is desperate. This heart-plague will not die out of its own accord, nor will any change of your outward condition eradicate it. Turn, then, to the great physician and cry to Him thus, "Lord God, You did make me. You can mend me. You did make me. You can make me over again. I am lost. Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, You can save me." Look heavenward and Christward. Look to the bleeding Lamb, to the risen Redeemer. To look within will breed despair, but to look to Christ on the cross, nay, to Christ now at the right hand of God, will beget lively hope. Jesus is "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them"—to look to Him is the main part of the cure. Bring God into the business. Bring Christ into your trouble, for here lies your cure. Look that way, I pray you. Look and live.

And when you have looked that way, the next thing to do is to *spread the trouble before God.* Some do not know how to pray. When you cannot pray, say, "O Lord, teach me to pray." But you say you do not feel—then I would urge you to confess, "Lord, I do not feel. My heart is hard. Lord, cause me to feel." Oh, but you say you are so disquieted and so restless. Go and tell Him,

"Lord! I am so disquieted. I cannot rest. Help me. Help me." Tell it all to Jesus without reserve. I am persuaded that if you will confess the plague to God, you will soon find help from that act of confession. The Lord Jesus will speedily relieve your conscience in a very special and effectual manner. Tell it to no man—tell it to God alone. Judas confessed to the priests and you know what he did next. Confess to God and you shall not go forth to hang yourself, but you will go forth to find that He is able to help you, for, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to save us from all unrighteousness." Pour out your heart before Him and it will ease you mightily.

After confession is made, with your eye to the sacrifice, *pray with your eye still upon the Lord Jesus*. Pleading the blood of Jesus, be persistent for pardon. No man has truly sought God in prayer, looking to Jesus Christ, and has been refused—and there never shall be such a man. I remember how I was struck with what my mother said to me when she was pleading with me to lay hold on Christ and I was despairing. She said, "There was never yet a man so wicked as to say that he had sincerely sought the Lord and asked mercy at His hands through Christ and yet had been denied." Now I thought that I had done so and I felt sure that the Lord had refused me and I half resolved in my mind that I would say as much. But I have never said it, for this reason, that I sought Him again and found Him, to the joy of my spirit. So shall it be with you, poor, weary seeker. You shall find Him soon if you seek Him with your whole heart. Eternity shall not reveal a single instance in which Christ Jesus cast away a sinner that came to Him. All hell shall be searched through and they shall ask them, "Is there one here that can say that Christ rejected him when he came to Him?" And though glad enough to blaspheme, there shall not be found among the damned a single tongue that shall dare to utter such a baseless slander against the Friend of sinners. My hearer, if you repentantly believe and yet are rejected, you will be the first. Come, then, ay, come tonight and tell out the plague of your heart, with your eye to Christ and then plead with God, "Lord, save me." I would put words into your mouth if I could, to say, "Lord, save me. I am lost. Save me. There is a plague in my heart, heal it. I confess my great sin, Lord, blot it out. I acknowledge my present depravity and tendency to sin, Lord, tear up my sin by the roots. You know my disquietude and my hardness of heart, Lord, give me peace. There is something in me, I scarce know what it is, that I must get rid of—Lord, rid me of it, for Jesus' sake. Oh, for Your Son's sake, for His blood's sake, for His death's sake. for His resurrection's sake, I beseech You, hear me." Earnest, childlike pleading shall certainly have its answer. Only do believe that the Lord can do this and He will do it. Faith is the starting point of salvation—yea, it brings you to salvation itself. Jesus Christ said, "Believe you that I am able to do this?" And the poor man answered, "Lord, I believe." Follow his example. My Lord Jesus Christ is God as well as man. He is the Son of the Highest and He came into this world and took the form of man and in that form He suffered, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Why, then, should we doubt Him? The merit of His precious blood is exceeding great beyond compare and He would have us believe in its eternal efficacy—why should we not? Do you say you cannot believe?

Read over the story of the four evangelists and then sit still awhile and think it all over. He who suffered so is God. The incarnate God died this shameful death to save the guilty. Surely as you look you will believe. The Holy Spirit will create faith in you by His own inspired testimony. You will say, "I know not how it is, but faith comes stealing over me. I do believe the dying Savior's love and I cast my soul upon Him." That is the way of salvation—just to rest in Christ. As the pitcher hangs on the nail, so must we hang on Christ. As the babe lies in its mother's arms without fear, so must we lie in the arms of Jesus. We must be nothing and Christ everything. When we do this, we shall get rest—rest from all the plague of the heart.

III. I close, lest I weary you, by mentioning, in the third place, HELPS WHICH WE MAY EXPECT TO RECEIVE if we follow the treatment which I have tried to describe.

The first help we shall get according to our text is, "Then hear in heaven, Your dwelling place, and forgive." In answer to your confession and your prayer and your looking to the great altar and the great sacrifice, there shall come a free pardon from the court of heaven. What a splendid word that is, "forgive," when you know God's sense of it. It is to cast into the depths of the sea all memory of sin, to blot it out as a paid debt, to drive it away as a cloud, to cover it so that it is out of sight forever, to cast it behind His back, yea, even to cause it to cease to be as though it had never been! I know one who differed from his friend and spoke, under a misunderstanding, more sharply than the case required. His friend was quite able to fight his own battles and say sharp things, too. The case was cleared up and misapprehension removed—and he who had been first offended said in all heartiness, "Let us take the sponge and clean the slate and begin anew, as if the past had never been." The other was a good man and true, but he paused so much in his reply that the first brother does not feel that he had healed the wound and felt tempted to say, "Say straight out that you do not mean to forgive and then I shall know where you are." A limping reconciliation is half a feud. But when God forgives, He means it and the offense is gone forever. He cleans off the record. It is all gone, every trace of it. I think I see that slate with your sins written thereon tonight, a long and heavy score, but if you go to the Lord as I have described, He will wipe it all out. As far as the east is from the west, He will remove your transgressions from you. Do you remember the story of Martin Luther when Satan came to him, as he thought, with a long black roll of his sins which truly might make a swaddling-band for the round world? To the archenemy Luther said, "Yes, I must own to them all. Have you any more?" So the foul fiend went his way and brought another longer roll and Martin Luther said "Yes, yes, I must own to them all. Have you any more?" The accuser of the brethren, being expert at the business, soon supplied him with a further length of charges till there seemed to be no end to it. Martin waited till no more were forthcoming and then he cried, "Have you any more?" "Were not these enough?" "Ay, that they were. But," said Martin Luther, "write at the bottom of the whole account, 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.'" Brethren, this was a receipt in full, stamped in such a manner that even Satan could not question the correctness

of it. However many or however few, all our sins are gone when the atoning blood comes in. I have an ugly thing in my study. It is a piece of iron with a sharp point to it at the top and the bottom is formed of a rounded piece of wood. It is not an ornamental object, especially as it holds impaled upon it a fine selection of bills which are inclined to go yellow and dusty. Bills are horrible things, but though I have a lot of them, they never horrify me in the least, for though they are very many and some of them are for large amounts, yet there is not one of them but what has Her Majesty's head in the corner with the name of the creditor to whom I have paid it. I have no fear of these records either day or night. In fact, it is a comfort to keep them now that they are discharged. When I look at the old bills, I think of my old sins, pierced through by my Lord and kept in my penitent memory as a witness to the value of His blood which has set me free from sin's tremendous debt. Here is the receipt for them all, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Some of you, I dare say, can look tonight at many of your transgressions. Are the bills all receipted? Are your sins all blotted out? Then you can bless the name of the Lord that the plague of your heart is gone. You are not afraid to live or afraid to die, for perfect pardon, irreversible pardon, pardon which makes a sweep of all transgression and sinks it as in a bottomless sea, from which it never can be washed up forever—pardon, perfect pardon is yours in Christ Jesus. How sweetly this now rings out. Is there any music of silver bell that can equal it? Pardon! Pardon!—

"Earth has a joy unknown in heaven.
The new-born peace of sins forgiven!
Tears of such pure and deep delight,
You angels! Never dimmed your sight."

The freeness, fullness, perpetuity, and completeness of pardon is its greatest joy. Our Lord does nothing by halves, but plunges the whole of our guilt into the sea of His own blood where it is drowned forever and being justified by faith, henceforth we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. That is the first help we will mention and who shall say that it is not a grand one?

Did you notice in my text a little word which follows pardon, "and *do"?* Now, when the Lord forgives a man's sins, He then begins to do for him many wonderful things. For instance, that hardness of the heart He melts down; that uneasiness He quiets; that tendency to sin He destroys by imparting a new tendency—a tendency to holiness. The Lord can make the old sinner to become a babe in grace so that he shall be just as if he were born again—nay, he *shall* be born again. An old man, who had lived a vicious life, sat down in his cottage a sad remnant of humanity, a worn-out waster of life and when his little grandchild came with curly locks and clambered up his knee, he patted his cheeks and murmured to himself, "O God, if I could be a little child again and begin anew!" That wish of many shall be fulfilled to all who look to Jesus. "Except you be converted and become as little children, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." "You must be born again." The mercy is that you *may* be born again. New life shall enter old hearts or old hearts shall be made new and filled with the life eternal which forever has the dew of its youth.

Turning your eye to the great sacrifice, altar, temple, Priest, even Jesus Christ, and crying to Him the prayer of faith, His Spirit will come upon you and working miracles upon you, will make you a new creature in Christ Jesus. Old things shall pass away and all things shall become new.

After that the Lord will continue to do great things for you. He will keep you to the end. He will lead you from strength to strength and from joy to joy. He will make you useful and that is what you never dreamed you could be. The thorny waste shall bear fruit a hundred-fold. He will take you from among sinners and put you among saints. And putting you among the saints, He will make your very experience of sin to be instrumental for good. As none make better gamekeepers than old poachers when they are reclaimed, so none seem better able to bring others to Christ than those who know what sin and salvation mean by actual experience. Such persons talk of what they have felt in their own case and when they are saved, they speak of a salvation which is manifest to everybody—for they are such changed men and changed women that no one can deny the power of grace upon them. How eagerly do I hope that my Lord Jesus will quarter on the enemy tonight. O Lord, come in and capture some out of this crowd. Say to many who throng this building, "Tonight I must abide in your house." O my brothers and sisters, lives no longer an indifferent life, but begin to care for your soul's eternal interests. No longer oppose your Savior. Become one of His disciples. He has many such as you are and He does not despise them because they once rioted in sin. On the contrary, He binds them to Himself by the greatness of their former guilt. They love Him much because they have had much forgiven and they serve Him all the more earnestly because of what He has done for them. The Lord grant that the same may happen in your case, for Jesus Christ's sake—and He shall have all the glory. Amen and Amen.

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CONTENTION ENDED AND GRACE REIGNING
NO. 1490

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 17, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For I will not contend forever, neither will I always be angry; for the spirits should fail before Me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I angry, and smote him: I hid and was angry, and he went on backsliding in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways and will heal him: I will also lead him, and restore comforts to him and to his mourners. Isaiah 57:16-18.

THE high and holy One that inhabits eternity is here speaking with Himself concerning Israel. The Lord is holding high soliloquy. He is not so much addressing the sons of men, bidding them do this or that, as speaking to Himself of what He intends to do among them. He allows His prophet to stand where he can hear the sacred soliloquy of the great Supreme and he hears it and then, under the dictate of the divine Spirit, he records it in the inspired book, where it remains to this day for our instruction. Hear, then, these words of the living God and let your hearts be satisfied concerning the secret purposes of Jehovah. Although the Lord may say many things to Himself which we do not hear, and which it were not well that we should hear, yet He never retracts in secret what He has spoken in public and specially we may rest assured that He never speaks in the dark places of the earth concerning the house of Jacob, "Seek you My face in vain?" No decree of God is contrary to the gospel—we may always be sure of that. Whenever He unveils before us His private thoughts, we never find them to be less gracious than His published words. The same love which spoke itself through prophets and seers dwells in the silent heart of God and abides forever at the full, even when it finds no voice. In the verses before us we find words of exceeding great mercy and special tenderness and we see moving before our adoring eye the eternal wisdom, the infinite patience, and the immutable love of the great Father. May it please the Lord, in very truth, to restore comforts unto His mourners by the subject which shall now engage our attention, for under the blessing of the Holy Spirit it is in every way calculated to cheer the contrite heart.

I. The first truth to which I call your attention is that God contends with men and that THE DIVINE CONTENTION IS WELL DESERVED on their part. He says, "I will not contend forever," in which it is implied that He does contend sometimes. Where He has purposes of eternal grace, the Lord, at the opening of His saving work, comes into contention with men. Smiting

comes before saving. He bends His bow and points His arrow against the heart's sin before He pours out His balm for the heart's wound. He usually gives the spirit of bondage before He sends the spirit of sonship—He thunders by the law before He waters the soul with the soft shower of the gospel. Nor need we wonder at this, for there is so much in man that is altogether opposed to the divine nature and alien to the object and design of God that there must be a conflict till the opposing principle is overcome and removed. The strong man armed will not go out except by force and neither will the Lord enter the soul except as a conqueror.

First I would speak of this to *the seeking sinner*. It may be that there are in this house anxious persons who were once careless and at ease, but now there is a striving within them and a conflict which rages terribly. The Lord has a controversy with them. However unhappy it makes them, I am right glad that the inward strife is felt by them. Anything is better than the horrible calm of the dead sea of spiritual indifference. My friend, your deadly peace is broken, your fatal sleep is ended, the magic spell of Satan has lost all its power, you are aroused and sadness rules the hour. Your wisest friends are glad of this—they welcome your return to feeling even as we rejoice to discover signs of life in one who has been snatched from a watery grave. There is now some hope for you. The Spirit of God has come to you as a spirit of bondage and this makes you fear, but fear is often the outrider of faith. The Lord's design in contending with you is to *convince you of your sin*. You will never see sin to be exceedingly sinful unless the Holy Spirit throws His own light upon it. You love sin too much to deal with it impartially—you are so tainted by it in your nature that your conscience by no means censures you so much as your iniquity deserves. Though some say that conscience is the vicegerent of God, there is nothing in the Scriptures to prove that statement, neither is it true. Conscience is an imperfect guide and monitor—and like all the other faculties, it is weakened and vitiated by the Fall so that it is a very prejudiced judge of right and wrong and too often it puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Conscience is often blinded by self-love and at all times apt to slumber. Until the Holy Spirit quickens your conscience, you will never discover to the full the enormity of sin. You may know it to be evil as a matter of dogma, but you will not feel it to be evil as a matter of experience, nor will you see how greatly, how continually, how wickedly you have offended the law of God unless the Lord opens your eyes. This He intends to do and He will not cease to strive with you till His purpose is performed. My dear friend, the Lord will probably keep up the controversy in your soul until your beauty consumes away and instead of admiring yourself, you come to loathe yourself. Though you wash yourself with snow-water and make yourself ever so clean, yet will He plunge you in the ditch till your own clothes shall abhor you. You shall see your righteousness to be filthy rags and your person to be under the curse—and then part of the Lord's design will be accomplished.

The next reason for the Lord's contending with you will begin to operate when the first purpose has been accomplished. You will, in your self-abasement, be driven to look to the grace of God. It is hard to part a man

from his sin. It is still harder to divorce Him from his self-righteousness and this is a part of the Lord's contention with awakened souls—He determines to rid them of all self-confidence because it is false confidence—and they on their part appear to be resolved to hold to self as long as there is a rag or a thread left. That our salvation is entirely of the grace of God is a lesson which we are slow to learn and yet we must learn it or perish. Dear anxious one, if ever you are saved it must be by an act of undeserved favor on God's part. I do not care who you are, you are guilty and if you escape execution, a free pardon will have to be given to you by the Great King for reasons found in Himself alone, for there is nothing in you which can constitute a claim for mercy. You may never have fallen into adultery or murder, nor even have committed theft or false witness, but the same grace is needed to save you as to save an adulteress or a murderer. You have no merit to plead, nor any claim upon God—such claims as you had as a creature you have forfeited and you have done nothing to create any other. You have committed treason against God and you are condemned already by His unquestionable justice. If you shall ever be saved, it must be by a high act of the Lord of mercy, passed in His infinite sovereignty, not because of anything in you to deserve it, but because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. So stands the matter and this controversy between you and your God is meant to bring this fact before you and push the question to an issue with you. When the Lord contends with a Mansoul and the law of the Lord enters his spirit, it hides pride from him and lays his glory in the dust. In fact, the truly awakened man cannot find a place low enough to lie in, nor words black enough in which to describe himself. He is driven to a deep spiritual despair of self and to a horror of soul at his presumption in having dared to offend against the God of heaven and a deeper horror still that he should have transgressed against the Christ of love and should have rejected Him year after year. May God bring you down to this prostrate condition if He has not done so. If the Lord has now begun to trouble you, He will not have done with you till He has laid you even with the ground. This will not only make you know that you must be saved by grace alone, but it will cause you to value grace itself as more to be desired than much fine gold. A soul with whom God has entered into the lists prizes every word of promise and every single look of grace, for he sees himself to be in an evil plight unless grace shall supervene. The tears of Jesus over sinners are very precious to hearts with whom God is contending and still much more precious is the blood, the heart's blood of Jesus with which He takes away sin. They can speak lightly of grace who have never had a heavy heart on account of their transgression, but give a man to feel the burden of sin and the faintest hope of grace will be worth all the king's jewels to him. O sirs, sin is a burden such as an angel's shoulders could not bear. It crushes a man not only into the dust but into the grave, nay, even there he cannot find rest. If nothing else were prepared for the impenitent in the next world except a sight and sense of their own sin, it would of itself create a hell within the human bosom. Stake and rack are nothing compared with the torments of remorse. It is God's design to make us feel

something of this, that we may bless His name if He does but look upon us or think upon us in a way of grace and that we may praise and magnify Him with all our hearts forever and ever when He freely pardons us for His own sake and accepts us in Christ Jesus. Do you wonder that God has a contention with seeking souls when such needful and beneficent designs are answered thereby?

Moreover, no one can be surprised that the Lord lets forth a measure of His wrath upon seeking sinners when we see how they behave, even while they are seeking. We have known them red hot one day and icy cold another and albeit that they long for mercy, you will see them, at certain seasons acting as if they despised it. At times they tremble at God's Word and then they are hardened against it. I may be speaking to some of you who know that during the time of your conviction of sin you have tried to stifle your feelings and you have sought to kill the messenger within who has so effectually aroused you. Many of you have run after carnal amusements and evil pleasures in order to drown conscience and escape from rebuke, and others of you have run to this, that, and the other pretended way of salvation instead of running to Christ alone for His free grace. All this provokes the Most High and therefore it cannot be wonderful that the Lord should have a contention with you.

But now I turn to *the people of God*. Sometimes, my brethren, our Lord has a contention with us and then He covers the daughter of Zion with a cloud in the day of His anger and He burns against Jacob like a flaming fire which devours round about. This is not at all wonderful when we consider how unworthy we often live towards His sacred name. Indeed, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." His contention with us will show itself occasionally in adverse providences. He will aim a deadly shaft at the beloved objects of our heart—perhaps not once alone does the arrow fly, but He seems to empty out His quiver and finds no other targets but the breasts of those who are our other selves. With one believer the Lord contends by a sickness in his own person. With another by the pining away of a beloved wife or child. The contention which the Lord has with His elect frequently displays itself in troubles connected with their temporal circumstances. Nothing prospers with them. They make a ship to go to Tarshish for gold and it is broken by a storm. A worm eats up all their increase. The caterpillar devours the garden and the locust, or the blight, or the drought, or the exceeding moisture destroys the produce of the field. When God has a controversy with His own people He smites again and again in this fashion, nor does He stop at bruises and bleeding wounds. Our heavenly Father never spares the rod. No sin of Eli can be alleged against Him.

Even more severe are His blows when it comes to be a controversy carried on by His Spirit within the mind. When the light of God's countenance is withdrawn, when conscience is allowed to point out inconsistencies, hypocrisies, and wanderings of heart, when the promises cease to be wells of comfort, when the means of grace appear to be dry and barren, when private prayer becomes rather a task than a pleasure and communion with God seems to be little more than looking up to an angry Father who only

frowns—this is much worse than any providential chastisement. When God smites a man in the heart, the blow is a staggering one. The affliction of the soul is the soul of affliction. God will touch His people in their bone and their flesh and in their very hearts. Ah, my brethren, if you remember your laxity in life, your dullness in prayer, your forgetfulness of God's Word, your hardness of heart at times towards poor sinners, your indifference to the Lord's cause, the want of life, the want of love, the want of power, the want of holiness, the want of the mind of Christ within, the want of delight in the divine will—you will perceive that there is quite enough in us to lead the Lord to have a controversy with us. Has He not said that He will walk contrary to us if we walk contrary to Him? Is it not His special word to us, "You only have I known of all the people of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for your iniquity"? Chastisement must come to the beloved child of a wise father. The servant may escape. The bastard may know no touch of the rod, but the true-born and well-beloved child of God must smart if he sins, not because his Father dislikes him, but because He loves him. The dearer we are to the heart of God the more jealous He is and the more does He resent any wandering of our heart from Him. His love is strong as death, blessed be His name, but as a natural consequence His jealousy is cruel as the grave. He will not endure impurity of heart in the beloved object of His eternal choice. I have, however, said enough upon this topic, if we are now ready to confess that the divine contention with us is well deserved.

II. We now advance to the next truth, namely, that THIS DIVINE CONTENTION WILL COME TO AN END WITH THE CONTRITE. We know that it will be so, for the words are very express, "For I will not contend forever, neither will I be always angry." Oh, catch at this, you humble and contrite ones with whom God has been contending. Here is a word of gracious, absolute, unconditional promise for you. May the Holy Spirit enable you to draw consolation from it.

The question arises—when may we expect that this promise will be fulfilled? Kindly notice the verse which precedes the text, for that assures us that God has no controversy with the humble and the contrite. This is self-evident, for He declares that with such He will dwell and the God of grace will not dwell in a house that is full of contention. He contends where He does not abide, but where He abides there is peace. When a man is humble and contrite, then God's contention with him has come to an end. Omnipotence will not lift its hand to overthrow one who yields himself up. Greatness does not strike a fallen foe who craves forgiveness. Majesty will not wreak vengeance upon suppliant misery. Crouch in the dust and Jehovah's wrath, which like His thunderbolt smites lofty things, will pass you by. Surrender unconditionally, be you saint or sinner. Throw down the weapons of rebellion, doff the plumes of pride, and sue out a pardon on your bended knee. Cry out, "Lord, I am undone, for I have done ill. I am cast away, for I have cast Your fear away. I must die, for I have slain myself. But God, be merciful to me a sinner." Majesty is ever pitiful to misery.

Nor is it majesty alone that you may look to with hope, but mercy also is your friend. Mercy is very speedy where confession is complete. "If we con-

fess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Be humbled, for to such God gives grace. The river of His goodness flows along the low valleys. Talk no more of your good works. Boast no longer of your Christian experience, your bright profession, your precise religiousness—but fall at Jesus' feet and lie down. Tears for your eyes are more becoming than rings for your ears. Sackcloth suits your case rather than fine attire. Be humble because you are a nobody. Be contrite because you are a sinner.

It is wonderful how the pity of God has in some cases been excited even by a temporary repentance. When wicked Ahab rent his clothes and put sackcloth upon himself, the Lord took note of it and said, "Do you see how Ahab humbled himself before Me? Because he humbled himself before Me I will not bring the evil in his days." When the Ninevites repented, though probably there was very little spiritual about their humbling, yet it was sincere as far as it went and the Lord turned from His fierce anger and there was a reprieve for the wicked city. This plainly shows that the Lord is speedily moved by true humiliation and if any soul will but lie before Him in self-abasement and lowliness, He will no longer contend, but will put away His anger. Besides, His truth is compromised in this matter for He has given a promise of grace which runs thus, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He shall lift you up" (James 4:10). He cannot spurn those who submit themselves before Him, for it is written, "Though the Lord is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly." He is full of grace and that grace is for the poor and needy. Condescension to the lowly is His glory, as the blessed Virgin sang of old, and as many fainting ones may sing at this moment if they will, "He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich He has sent away empty." The Lord delights in mercy and His mercy delights to come to those who are most abased in their own esteem and judge themselves to be least worthy of it. We are quite sure that the divine contention will come to an end with the humble and contrite, because as we have said, the promise is, "I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." Do not say, dear cast down one, "God will never look at me. I have no hope, no strength, no merit." This self-abasement prepares you for Him. By this is your house swept and emptied for God to dwell in. He has two houses—one is above in glory and that high house above is none too high for Him. His other dwelling is below in all His condescension and the lowliest heart is none too lowly for Him. He comes not to wholehearted men who bear their heads aloft and scarcely own their need of His favor—He comes not to those who trust in themselves and think but little of His grace, but—

"He bids His awful chariot roll
Far downward from the skies,
To visit every humble soul
That low before Him lies."

Lowly roofs attract Deity. He comes to those who are broken in heart and when He comes, the contention is over.

And what else does the Lord promise to do? He says He will dwell with the humble and He adds that He will revive them. You are fainting now, poor soul. You are very feeble. You are as one that is slain—the Lord will come and revive you—that is, give you new life. He will give you life enough to hope in His mercy. Life enough to believe in Jesus Christ, His dear Son. Life enough to see your transgression covered forever, never to be laid to your charge. He will not contend forever, for on the contrary, He will revive the spirit of the humble. Perhaps He means by adding a second "revive," to make us a promise of comfort, "to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Weeping one, He will wipe away those tears. Despairing sinner or desponding saint, if you will lie low at His feet, He will stoop to you and cheer your heart. So anxious is He to cheer His mourners that the third person of the blessed Trinity has undertaken this special work. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, loves to come where there is comforting work to do. Look up now from your beds, you soul-sick ones, for the great Physician comes to heal you. He ends the inner conflict of your nature by becoming Himself your peace. Look up now, you that sit in darkness, in the valley of the shadow of death, bound with affliction and iron, for the time of your deliverance has come. I know your plight, for I have been in it myself, and while I am speaking to you, I am remembering the time when my chains clanked as I walked and when, as I lay down to sleep, they entered into my soul so that the visions of the night alarmed me. Job's cry was mine, "I was at ease, but He has broken me asunder. He has also taken me by my neck and shaken me to pieces and set me up for His mark." Thus was it with me once, but it was not so forever, for in tender pity my Lord laid down the sword and spoke comfortable words to me. Just when I had come to the worst and I thought no hope would ever visit me, I was made to realize the blessed truth of the text, "I will not contend forever, neither will I be always angry," and of that other promise, "With this man will I dwell, even with him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembles at My Word." Encouraged by my own experience of great love, I feel bound to comfort others. Penitent hearts, He will revive you. He will give you comfort again. Your mourning He will turn to dancing and your sackcloth into beautiful array. Do not, I pray you, sorrow as those that are without hope. This is not the den of despair—so long as this life lasts, it is the hill of hope. Neither are you a person who has any cause to despair, since those whom the Lord chastens, He certainly has not cast away.

Men do not prune the vine which they mean to root up and cast into the fire. This chastening is not unto death. There is a measure to your stripes which cannot be passed and there will be a speedy and happy end to the scourging. The Lord's anger endures but for a night and that night will end in a hopeful dawn. When your proud spirit is conquered, the Lord's controversy with you is closed.

III. I would now ask your loving attention to this choice fact, that GOD HIMSELF FINDS REASONS FOR ENDING THE CONTENTION. We could not have found any, for in ourselves there is much cause for the Lord's anger, but none for His grace. A convinced sinner can give no reason why he should be saved. It is a part of his conviction that his mouth is closed as to

self-justification. He can make neither apology nor appeal—he feels that he will have to say, "Amen," to his own damnation if God drive him away from the Mercy Seat. But the Lord Himself finds reasons for His grace. Two of these He mentions in our text.

The first is found in human weakness *and its inability to bear the divine contention*. "I will not contend forever, neither will I be always angry; for the spirits would fail before Me, and the souls which I have made." The Lord's chastisement is meant to be corrective, not destructive. His intent is curing, not killing and therefore He will not make His medicine too potent or His surgery too severe. He presses His heavy hand on the sinner until he cries out with David, "Day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." He felt as destitute of life-moisture as if God had wrung him out as men do a wet sheet and made him dry as cloth which has hung up in the hot sun. All his life and spirits were gone out of him and he felt that his bones were dried and fit only for the morgue. When things have come so far, the merciful Lord says, "But I do not desire to kill him. I do not purpose his destruction, for I hate nothing that My hands have made. Nay, I love with all my heart this poor, troubled soul whom it is in My mind to bless." "The Lord does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." He aims at whipping self out of us, but it is not His will to crash the humble under His feet. In measure will He debate with us, for He aims at our conviction and conversion and not at our condemnation. If He were to go forth to fight against us, it would be as when fire enters into battle with briars and thorns. He would go through us and burn us together. Our weakness shall plead for us, even as it is said in the seventy-eighth psalm, at the thirty-eighth verse, "But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not: yes, many a time turned He His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath. For He remembered they were but flesh; a wind that passes away and comes not again." Upon certain strong minds God lays a heavy lead of conviction, as for instance, upon John Bunyan, whose five years of inward contention you will find mapped out in his, "Grace Abounding." But these cases are not the rule and in such instances the Lord means to make a peculiarly useful and experienced man. In the formation of a competent leader and a spiritual champion, the Lord exercises the man to make him expert in dealing with others. But He does not do this with poor, weak minds which are rendered still weaker by the assaults of Satan and their inward fears. "He gathers the lambs in His bosom and does gently lead those that are with young." "I will not contend forever," He says, "for the spirits should fail before Me, and the souls which I have made." Some men under a sense of sin have been driven to lay violent hands upon themselves. Others have been scarcely able to eat or drink and many have been severely injured in their health by the inward corrosion caused by strong conviction. A sense of sin fills some souls with gall and wormwood to such a degree that they are drunken with it and are as men at their wits' end, but God stays His rough wind and holds in the rage of His tempest. In due time He says to Moses, "Stand back, and let your law-work cease; you have been faithful as My servant, now retire and let My Son come in, for He is meek and lowly in

heart and those who tremble at My Word shall now find rest unto their souls by His knowledge." Yes, this is God's reason for being gentle with His people, "For My name's sake will I defer My anger and for My praise will I refrain for you, that I cut you not off." Sometimes when He sends them correction after correction, chastisement after chastisement, they can scarcely bear up under it, but it is never His intention to destroy His own children and therefore He stays His hand and says that He will not always chide, nor keep His anger forever, for, "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him; for He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." If any of you are enduring such a variety of troubles that you are staggered and feel that you can hold up no longer, then you must appeal to the pity of the Lord. If your heart is like a lily when the stalk is bruised, drooping on its stem, and your soul is pining like a consumptive child and your heart is melted like wax in the midst of your bowels, let your weakness appeal to God. Yea, it is appealing even now. He says, "I know their sorrows. I have surely seen the affliction of My people and I have heard their cry. I have visited their transgression with the rod and they are brought very low, but they can bear no more, therefore shall the sighing of the prisoner come before Me." The Lord marks man, "fragile," as we do boxes of glass which must not be roughly handled lest they are broken. In this frailty He finds a reason for tenderness—let His name be adored for it.

His second reason is, to my mind, even more extraordinary. It is given in the next verse, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I angry, and smote him: I hid and was angry, and he went on backsliding in the way of his heart." This argument is founded on *the inoperativeness of the divine contention upon the heart which is to be won*. The Lord says, "I was angry with him and smote him." Did he repent! No. I hid My face from him. Did he humble himself? "He went on backsliding in the way of his heart." What is the reason of this wicked petrifying of the heart? Here is the key to the cause—

"Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone.
Nothing but a blood-bought pardon
Can dissolve a heart of stone."

Affliction often drives the child of God into impatience and of itself it has a hardening and not a softening influence, while the convictions worked in us by the Spirit of God are often perverted into causes of unbelief and Satan comes in and drives the soul to unworthy thoughts of God. Such is our evil heart that it even curdles self-loathing and hatred of sin into a reluctance to go to God and into a persuasion of the impossibility of mercy. I have known humiliation and self-despair, which are so much to be desired, lead to unbelief, which is the saddest of all crimes. "Therefore," says the Lord, "I will not contend any longer; for My anger seems to excite rebellion rather than to subdue it." See a wise father when he has a proud and obstinate boy who has become estranged. He puts him under strict rule and discipline and he chides and chastens him, but if the child evidently grows more stubborn, if he is manifestly of such a spirit that the more you drive him, the more he will not be driven, his father says within himself, "I will try other methods

with him and see what gentleness will do." Such is the mind of God who says, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I angry and smote him: I hid and was angry and he went on backsliding in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways and will heal him: I will lead him also and restore comforts to him and to his mourners." If wrath will not humble us, the Lord may yet in His grace try what love can do. He will love us to a better mind, till our heart sings—

"And do You still invite my love,
And court me to be blessed?
Will You my friend and patron prove,
My refuge and my rest?
Convinced, ashamed, amazed, I now
Obey Your gracious call.
To love's command I freely bow,
And offer You my all."

IV. This brings us to the fourth and last point which is this—God Himself, having found a reason why He should cease from contention, nay, two reasons, the one in our weakness and the second in the failure of His own chastisement by reason of the flesh—HE HIMSELF INVENTS AND PROPOSES ANOTHER METHOD FOR ENDING HIS CONTENTIONS and making us right with Himself. Here it is and we note in the first place that it is an *astonishing* method, "I have seen his ways and will heal him." Hear this, O you heavens, and be astonished, O earth! God's mercy is not blind mercy. He is merciful in spite of His clear vision of our sins. "I have seen his ways and yet I will heal him." If God had not seen man's sin, His passing by it would be easy to understand. What the eye does not see, the heart does not rue. But it is wonderful that it should be written, "I have seen his ways and will heal him." The Lord seems to say, "I see him become more obstinate the more I smite him. I see him provoking Me over and over again though I chide with him. I see not only his ways, but I see through his ways the rebellious heart which dwells within. I see that he is worthless, undeserving, ill-deserving and hell-deserving. I see that his mind is set on mischief, that he is altogether estranged from Me, even from his birth and that his whole nature is tainted with rebellion." Yet the Lord adds that astonishing word of grace, "I have seen his ways and will heal him." O soul, God sees what you are. He knows your secret wickedness and you have not half such an idea of your own sin and perverseness as He has. And yet, over the head of it all leaps the eternal, boundless mercy, "I have seen his ways and will heal him."

Note that it is an *effectual method*. "I have seen his ways and will *heal* him"—not, "I will smite him again," but "I will treat his sin as if it were a disease." That is a very wise thing to do with persons who grievously offend you. When a man's action is very provoking, I like to hear people say, "Surely he must be a little wrong in the head. Poor man, he must be out of order or he would not act so." Put the best construction you can upon an offense and treat it as if it arose out of disease. It is true that sin is much more than a disease and God might treat us altogether and only from its criminal side, but still it is a disease and therefore He resolves to treat it as such. Our great Lord in effect cries, "Oh, this wicked creature of Mine will not own its

Creator. This sinful child of Mine will persist in rebelling against My love. Surely something ails him. I will not chasten him again, but I will treat him as a sick man and I will heal him. I will change his nature. I will take away the heart of stone out of his flesh. I will give him a heart of flesh. I will take those dry eyes and fill them with tears. I will take that dumb tongue and inspire it with prayer. I will take that careless heart and melt it with holy penitence. I have seen his ways and will heal him." It is an astonishing way. It is an effectual way.

Notice further that it is a *tender* way, "I will lead him also." Observe that word. The sinner will have his own way and the Lord has been driving him into another, but he will not go. Now the Lord will come to him in gentleness and lead him. He will say, "Come now, let us reason together." He will appeal to him and say, "Do not contend with Me any longer. I can strike hard and I could, if I would, strike you into hell, but do not fight with Me. Let us make peace. 'As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but that he should turn unto Me and live.'" Come unto the Lord, you poor broken-hearted one. He has only striven with you to wean you from your sin and make it possible for Him to save you. Stand not up in your puny insignificance to contend against your God. Do not brazen it out with Him—the mere strap of His belt will break you—as for His sword, if He uses it upon you, you are utterly slain. Come, for He will put your sin away. He will cease from His fierce anger and reveal His love. He proclaims pardon. Free grace and dying love are the charming bells which ring you into the banquet of grace. The Lord leads the contrite soul step by step—there is no driving—but like as a shepherd goes before his sheep, so the Lord Jesus goes before broken, humble, and contrite spirits and they know His voice and follow Him.

Observe, also, how *complete* is this method. As if all that went before were not enough, it is added, "I will restore comforts to him and to his mourners." How tender this is. He will take away the sorrow as well as the sin, the killing grief as well as the killing disease. He will give us the true balm of Gilead and will pour such wine and oil into our gaping wounds that all shall be healed and the bones which He had broken shall rejoice.

I do not know whether I have succeeded in striking you all with an impression of my Master's great love, but it is very much upon my soul at this time. It amazes me that though He has been contending with us, after all it is no contention of His heart, but only of His hand! When we have resisted and kept up the contention, He says, "I have struck you and you revolt more and more. Why should you be struck any more? Your whole head is sick and your whole heart faint with My striking you. I will chasten you no more, but change My method. I have brought you down almost to death's door by affliction and yet you kick and struggle still, as if the last breath in you should be spent in fighting against M, but I will conquer you. If it cannot be accomplished by fear, it shall be achieved by love. If you will not yield to My thunder, you shall yield to My sunshine. If you will not bow before My throne, you shall fall before My cross. I will die for you and so I will win you. I will let My own heart be broken for you, that at last you shall look at Me

and your heart shall be broken. I will love you. I will love you into life. I will love you up from the very gates of hell. I will love you till you love Me." O irresistible love! Who can stand against You? O Lord, this morning Your people, if they have rebelled, come weeping back to You to ask You again to give the kiss of reconciliation. We yield. We yield, submitting ourselves without reserve to God. Many a poor sinner who has given up the hope of being saved under the crushing blows of conviction and chastisement, should now cry, "I can hold out no longer—

"Lord, what hard heart can still withstand,
And still rebellious prove?
Refuse to bow to Your command,
Or to accept Your love?
O'ercome by glorious grace, I now
My former war give o'er.
To Your command I gladly bow,
And would contend no more."

Oh, come, you wanderers and rest in Jesus. Come, you most lost, most ruined, most hopeless, and find heaven begun in Christ. Oh, you that sit on the verge of perdition, who have made a covenant with death and a league with hell, whose death warrant seems to be signed and put into your hands so that you read it by the flames of hell, whose fury you anticipate—come to Jesus and that handwriting of death shall be blotted out. The impending judgment seems even now to scorch your souls—come and find deliverance from it, for God Himself invites you. Tarry no longer. May Jesus sweetly lead you to Himself. Amen.

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REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE
NO. 1491

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 24, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Remember Lot's wife."
Luke 17:32.

IT was the purpose of God always to maintain a testimony for truth and righteousness in the midst of this ungodly world. For this end, of old He set apart for Himself a chosen family with whom He had fellowship. Abraham was the man whom God chose, that in him and in his household the witness might be preserved. This chosen family was called out and separated from its ancestors and led apart to dwell as wayfaring men in the land of Canaan. They were not to go into the cities and mingle with other races, but to dwell in tents as a separate tribe lest their character should become polluted and their testimony should be silenced. It was the Lord's intent that the people should dwell alone and not be numbered among the nations. Abraham, being called, obeyed and went forth, not knowing where he went. His separated life gave great exercise to his faith and so strengthened it that it became a calm, unstaggering assurance and this enabled him to enjoy a quiet, sublime, and happy career, dependent only upon God and altogether above as well as apart from man. With him was his nephew Lot, who also left Haran at the divine call and shared with the patriarch his wanderings in Canaan and in Egypt. He was not a man of so noble a soul, but was greatly influenced by the stronger mind of his Uncle Abraham. He was sincere, no doubt, and is justly called righteous Lot, but he was more fit to be a follower than a leader. He also sojourned in tents and led the separated life until it became necessary for him to become an independent chieftain, because the flocks and herds of the two families had so greatly multiplied that they could not well be kept together. Then came out the weak side of Lot's character. He did not give Abraham the choice in selecting a sheep walk, but like all weak natures, he selfishly consulted his own advantage and determined to go in the direction of the cities of the plain of Jordan where well-watered pastures abounded. This led to his dwelling near the cities of the plain, where crime had reached its utmost point of horrible degradation. We read that "he pitched his tent toward Sodom." He found it convenient to be near a settled people and to enter into friendly relations with them, though he must have known what the men of Sodom were, for the cry of them had gone forth far and wide. Thus he began to leave the separated path. After a while he went further, for one step leads to another. He was a lover of ease and therefore he gave up the tent life, with its many inconveniences, and went to live with the townsmen of Sodom—a thing to be wondered at as well as deplored. He did not cease to be a good man, but he did cease to be a faithful witness for his God.

Abraham seems to have given him up altogether from that day, for we find that noble patriarch inquiring of the Lord concerning his heir, saying, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?" And the Lord said, "This shall not be your heir." Now, this inquiry would have been needless had Lot been still reckoned to belong to the chosen seed, for naturally Lot was the heir of Abraham—but he forfeited that position and gave up his portion in the inheritance of the elect house by quitting the separated life. Lot, although he dwelt in Sodom, was not happy there, neither did he become so corrupt as to take pleasure in the wickedness of the people. Peter says that God delivered just Lot vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. He tried to bear his protest in the place, and signally failed, as all must do who imitate him. His witness for purity would have been far more powerful if he had kept apart from them, for this is the protest which God demands of us when He says, "Come you out from among them, be you separate." '

In the midst of the world, which lies in the wicked one, Lot lived on, not without greatly degenerating in spirit, until the kings came and carried him away captive. Then by the intervention of Abraham he was delivered from the captivity which threatened him and brought back again. This was a solemn warning and you would have thought that Lot would have said, "I will go back to Abraham's way of living. I will again become a sojourner with God. Sodom's walls without God are far less safe than a frail tent when God is a wall of fire around it." His vexation with the conversation of the lewd townsmen ought to have made him long for the sweet air of the wild country, but it was not so. He again settles down in Sodom and forgets the holy congregation which clustered around the tent of Abraham. Being still a man of God, he could not be allowed to die in such society—it was not to be endured that "just Lot" should lay his bones in the graveyard of filthy Sodom. If God would save a man, He must fetch him out from the world—he cannot remain part and parcel of an ungodly world and yet be God's elect one, for this is the Lord's own word to the enemy at the gates of Eden, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed." Did He not also say to Pharaoh, "I will put a division between My people and your people?" The Lord will sooner burn all Sodom down than Lot shall continue to be associated with its crimes and dragged down by its evil spirit. And so it came to pass that Lot was forced out—he was placed in such a strait that he must either run for his life or perish in the general burning. Happy had it been for him if he had lived all the while in the holy seclusion of Abraham. He would not, then, have lost the inheritance for his seed, nor have passed away under a dark, defiling cloud, nor have missed his place among the heroes of faith of whom Paul writes in the famous chapter of Hebrews, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

Here I must pause or you will think that I have misread my text and that I am preaching from the words, "Remember Lot"—and indeed I might profitably do so, for there is much of warning in the history of Lot

himself. If Christian men are so unwise as to conform themselves to the world, even if they keep up the Christian character in a measure, they will gain nothing by worldly association but being vexed with the conversation of the ungodly and they will be great losers in their own souls—their character will be tarnished, their whole tone of feeling will be lowered, and they themselves will be wretchedly weak and unhappy. Conformity to the world is sure to end badly sooner or later—to the man himself it is injurious and to his family ruinous.

But the text says, "Remember Lot's *wife*" and therefore I must let the husband go and call your attention to her, who in this case, is "his worse half." When the time for separation arrived, Lot's wife could not tear herself away from the world. She had always been in it and had loved it and delighted in it. Though associated with a gracious man, when the time came for decision, she betrayed her true character. Flight without so much as looking back was demanded of her, but this was too much—she did look back and thus proved that she had sufficient presumption in her heart to defy God's command and risk her all—to give a lingering love-glance at the condemned and guilty world. By that glance she perished. That is the subject of our discourse. The love of the world is death. Those who cling to sin must perish, be they who they may.

Do not omit to notice the connection of the text, for therein our Lord bids us hold the world with a loose hand and always be ready to leave it all. When we are called to it, we are to be ready to go forth without a particle in our hands. "In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back." Life itself they were not to hold dear, but to be ready to lay it down for His sake, for He said, "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." To be divided from the world, its possessions, its maxims, its motives, is the mark of a disciple of Christ and in order to keep up the feeling of separateness among His followers, our Lord bade them, "Remember Lot's wife." She is to be a caution to us all, for God will deal with us as with her if we sin as she did. "The thing which has been is the thing which shall be." If our hearts are glued to the world, we shall perish with the world. If our desires and delights look that way and if we find our comfort in it, we shall have to see our all consumed and shall be ourselves consumed with it in the day of the Lord's anger. Separation is the only way of escape—we must flee from the world or perish with it. "Depart you, depart you, go you out from there, touch no unclean thing; go you out of the midst of her; be you clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord."

I. "Remember Lot's wife." And our first point shall be—REMEMBER THAT SHE WAS LOT'S WIFE. She was the wife of a man who, with all his faults, was a righteous man. She was united to him in the closest possible bonds and yet she perished. She had dwelt in tents with holy Abraham and seemed to be a sharer in all the privileges of the separated people and yet she perished. She was dear to one who had been dear to the father of the faithful and yet for all that she perished in her sin. This note of warning we would strike very loudly, for, commonplace as the truth is,

it needs often to be repeated that ties of blood are no guarantees of grace. You may be the wife of the saintliest man of God and yet be a daughter of Belial. Or you may be the husband of one of the King's daughters and yet be yourself a castaway. You may be the child of a prophet and yet the curse of the prophet's God may light upon you. Or you may be the father of a most gracious family and yet still be an alien to the commonwealth of Israel. No earthly relationship can possibly help us if we are personally destitute of the spiritual life. Our first birth does not avail us in the kingdom of God, for that which is born of the flesh at its very best is flesh and is prone to sin and will certainly perish. We must be born again, for only the new birth, which is of the Spirit and from above, will bring us into covenant bonds. O you children of godly parents, I beseech you look to yourselves that you be not driven down to hell from your mother's side. O you relatives of those who are the favorites of heaven, I beseech you look to yourselves that you die not within sight of heaven in spite of all your advantages. In this matter, remember Lot's wife.

Being Lot's wife, remember that she had, since her marriage, shared with Lot in his journeys and adventures and trials. We cannot tell exactly when she became Lot's wife, but we are inclined to the belief that it was after he had left Haran, for when Abraham left Haran we read that he took "Sarai, his wife, and Lot, his brother's son," but we do not read of Lot's wife. The name of Abraham's wife is given, but of Lot's wife there is no mentioning whatever. Again, we read, "Abram went up out of Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south." "And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents." But nothing is said about his having a wife. She must have been a person of very small consideration, for even when it is certain that Lot was married, when he was taken captive and afterwards rescued by Abraham, all we find is this, "And Abraham brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people." We suppose that Lot's wife is included under the word, "the women." Now the Holy Spirit never puts a slight upon good women—in connection with their husbands they are generally mentioned with honor—and in this book of Genesis it is specially so. Sarah and Rebekah and Rachel have each an honorable memorial and as no mention is made of Lot's wife, we may infer that she was not worthy to be mentioned. She could hardly have been an inhabitant of Sodom, as the Jewish traditions assert, unless she was a widow, as they say, and the daughters mentioned were hers by a previous marriage. For at the destruction of Sodom, Lot had marriageable daughters and it would not seem that Lot had then been separated from Abraham for many years. True, the women of Sodom may have been given in marriage at an earlier age than was usual with the Abrahamic stock and if so, Lot's wife may have been a native of Sodom, for it is possible that he dwelt there for twenty years. More probably, however, either in Canaan or in Egypt, Lot married a Canaanite or an Egyptian woman—a person utterly unworthy to be taken into the holy household and therefore the marriage is not recorded. It was the custom of that elect and separated family, as you know, to send back to Padan-aram to fetch from there some daughter of the same house, that the pure

stock might be preserved and that there might be no connection with the heathen. It was Abraham's desire for Isaac and he charged his steward to carry it out, saying, "And I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the whole earth, that you shall not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but you shall go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac." This also was Isaac's desire for Jacob, for we read, "And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, You shall not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take you a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother." It seems to me that Lot had married a heathen woman and so her name is omitted. Whether it is so or not, it is certain that she had shared with Lot in the capture of the city of Sodom—she had seen the ruthless sword slay the inhabitants and she herself with her husband had been among the captives and she had been delivered by the good sword of Abraham. So you see that she had been a partaker of her husband's trials and deliverance and yet she was lost. It will be a sad, sad thing if there should come an eternal severance between those united by marriage bonds—that we should live together and work together and suffer together and should be delivered by the providence of God many a time together and should see our children grow up together and yet should be torn asunder at the last never to meet again. This is a prospect which we dare not think upon. Tremble, you whose love is not in Christ, for your union will have an end. What says the Savior? "I tell you, in that night there shall be two in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left." It matters not how close the association, the unbeliever must be divided from the living child of God. If you cling to the world and cast your eye back upon it, you must perish in your sin, notwithstanding that you have eaten and drunk with the people of God and have been as near to them in relationship as wife to husband or child to parent. This makes the remembrance of Lot's wife a very solemn thing to those who are allied by ties of kindred to the people of God.

Lot's wife had also *shared her husband's privileges*. Her husband had not forgotten his association with Abraham and he could not have failed to communicate this knowledge to her. The one God was worshipped and Lot's wife was present. She knew of the gracious covenant which God had made with His separated people and she knew that her husband was one of the families. She had cast in her lot with the chosen people of God apparently, though her heart was not in it and she therefore joined their sacred songs and their holy prayers. She saw the daily provision which God made for His people and the joy which Abraham had in abiding under the shadow of the Almighty. Even in Sodom her husband kept up such separateness as he could in such an evil place and she saw the goodness of the man with all his mistakes. When Sodom must be destroyed, the angels came to their house and she herself helped to entertain them. She received the merciful warning to escape as well as her

husband and she was urged as much as he to flee from the wrath so near at hand. Thus is it with many of you who are enjoying all sorts of Christian privileges and are yet unsaved. You come to the Lord's Table and eat and drink of the memorials of His body and blood and yet you remain unsaved. You seem to be part and parcel of the church of God and if there is any privilege or advantage, a share of it is set before you. If there is any fellowship, you are not excluded. If there is any joy, it is not denied you. You will have to say at last, "Lord, Lord, we have eaten and drunk in Your presence and You have taught in our streets," and oh, how wretched it will be to hear Him say, "I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity." It must be so if your souls are clinging to sin and you are casting a yearning eye to the ungodly world. It must be so and if you need proof, "Remember Lot's wife."

Lot's wife had *shared in her husband's errors*. It was a great mistake on his part to abandon the outwardly separated life, but she had kept to him in it and perhaps was the cause of his so doing. I suppose he thought he could live above the world spiritually and yet mingle with its votaries, even as some now do who enter into worldly company and yet hope to walk with God in spirit. He said to himself, "It is very uncomfortable to wander alone in this deserted wilderness and to dwell in these temporary tents. I wish I had a more abiding dwelling and could mingle on peaceable terms with those around me." He ceased to look for the city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God and he wanted to take up citizenship here. I should not wonder if Lot's wife influenced him in that way. He was a man of weak mind and while his uncle had him under his wing, he was right enough, except that even then he had what a writer calls, "a lean-to religion"—he did not stand alone, but leaned upon Abraham. When he was married, it is probable that his wife assumed the ruling place and guided the way of his life. She began to think that it was a pity that the family should live in such separation, so unfashionable, so rigid, and so peculiar and all that. She tossed her head and cried, "Really, people must mix with society and not keep up old-fashioned, strait-laced ways. You might as well be dead as be shut out from life." When her husband had an opportunity of getting out of that rigid style by leaving his uncle, she said she would like to go down Sodom way because it would be nice for the girls and give them a taste of something liberal and refined. The old style was all very well for such an antiquated couple as Abraham and Sarah, but Lot and herself belonged to a younger generation and were bound to get into a little society and find eligible matches for their young people. It would be well for them to dress better than they could learn to do if they always kept roaming about like gypsies. You see, Abraham's people did not study the fashions at all and were a very vulgar sort of shepherds who had no ideas of refinement and politeness and it was pity that people in Lot's station in life should always associate with mere sheep-shearers and drovers and the like. If they got to Sodom there would be nice parties and dances and all sorts of things. Of course the people were a little loose and rather fast—they went to plays where modesty was shocked and gathered in admiration around performers whose lives were openly wanton—but then you

see one must be fashionable and wink at a good deal. We cannot expect all people to be saints and no doubt they have their good points. By some such talk Mistress Lot gained her husband over to her way of thinking. They did not mean actually to go into the worst society of Sodom, but they intended to make a careful selection and go only a little way. Surely they could be trusted to know where to stop. So they pitched the tent towards Sodom where it was within an easy walk of the town—a little separated, but not far. If anything did happen that was very bad they could move away and no harm would be done, but until they saw the harm of it, they liked the neighborhood and the ways of the townsfolk. It was no doubt wise, they said, to go and see Sodom and know the people, for it would be ridiculous to condemn what they had not seen. They would therefore try it and give the young people some idea of what the world was like. Very sweet the city life became. The free and easy ways of Sodom came to be enjoyable. Not the gross part of Sodom life—that Lot could not bear—and it made Mistress a bit uncomfortable at times, but the liberal spirit, the fine free bearing of the people, their gaiety and artistic culture were quite to her mind and so she was right glad when her husband put away the old tent, had a sale of the sheep and lived as a retired grazier in the west end of the city.

I think I am not mistaken in the conjecture that Mistress Lot's influence brought her husband there and when there, introduced him to the best families and found suitors for the daughters who had been fully imbued with the liberal ideas of the place. At any rate, whatever were Lot's faults, she was a partaker in them. She was with him in the choosing the plain of Jordan, with him in the pitching of the tent towards Sodom, with him in actually settling in Sodom and I could almost hope with him in bearing as good a protest as they could against the vilest of Sodom's sins, but certainly with him in giving up the strictness and severity of the separated life. Yet at last she was separated from him forever. For his errors, notwithstanding their grievous mischief to him, did not utterly destroy the life of God in his soul. As for her, she never had any spiritual life and now, when she is called to leave Sodom, she shows her love to it by a distinct disobedience to God and an open turning to the doomed city and so she perishes. Oh, you that are Christian people because your friends are Christian people, you that associate with us because it happens to be the way in which you were brought up, the time will come when the secret attachment of your hearts towards a giddy world will show itself most clearly and in a fatal moment you will give a love look towards sin which will prove you do not belong to the people of God. Then will it happen to you according to the word of the apostle, "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

II. And now, secondly, "Remember Lot's wife" and remember that SHE WENT SOME WAY TOWARDS BEING SAVED. Mistress Lot so far believed the message that came to her about the destruction of the city that she was aroused. She rose early as her husband did and she prepared to leave the house. She ran down the streets, she passed the city gate, she

reached the open plain along with her husband. She was willing for a while to run with him, following his example. She did so for a considerable distance till she began to think over what she was doing and to consider what she was leaving and then she slackened her pace and lingered behind. Remember, then, that she did go part of the way towards safety and yet she perished. And so many may go part of the way towards Christ and they may go a little way out of the world, but if their hearts still linger with the ungodly, they will perish, notwithstanding all. There is one very solemn thought and that is that the angel's hand had pressed her wrist. When they said, "Up, get you gone" and Lot lingered—the men laid hold upon his hand and the hand of his wife. So it is expressly said. An angel's hand had pressed her wrist to draw her forth to safety and she had gone a little way under that sacred constraint and yet she perished. Some of you may have had spiritual touches upon the conscience and heart which you will never be able to quite forget and the responsibility of this will cling to you, though you have drawn back from godliness and your heart cries after vanity and lusts after its idols.

This woman was actually out of Sodom and she was almost in Zoar, the refuge city, and yet she perished. How near she was to the little city of escape I cannot tell, but she was certainly almost there and yet she perished. *Almost saved, but not quite.* Let me repeat those words, for they describe some of you who are present at this hour and they may be your epitaph if you do not mind what you are about, "ALMOST SAVED, BUT NOT QUITE." Escaped from the vilest form of sin, but not truly in Christ. The mind not weaned from its idols, iniquity not given up in the soul, though perhaps given up in outward deed. O you who are ALMOST SAVED, BUT NOT QUITE, "Remember Lot's wife."

III. This brings me to a third point of remembrance, which is this—remember that though she went some way towards escape, SHE DID ACTUALLY PERISH THROUGH SIN. The first sin that she committed was that *she lingered behind*. Moses tells us, "Lot's wife looked back from behind him." That is, the good old man was making such haste as he could, but she, though she had run with him side by side, lingered in the rear—I should not wonder but what the same angel had one of them by the right hand and the other by the left, while the other angel brought the two daughters on behind. But Lot's wife after all slackened her pace and fell behind. That is the first sin with most people who profess religion, but are not true to God. They begin to backslide by creeping along very slowly—they are not half so earnest as they used to be, so they lag behind. One service a day is sufficient. A very little reading of the Bible contents them. They do not quite give up the appearance of prayer, but still there is very little of it. They do not see the good of being in such a fury over religion. They do not see why they should exercise any sacred violence to take the kingdom by force. They linger. It is because after all the world is master of their hearts. They would if they dare be as worldly and as ungodly as others and they prove their true character by slackening their pace.

Having slackened her pace, the next thing she did was *she disbelieved* what had been told her. You must remember that their flight out of Sod-

om was to be an act of faith, for the angel said, "Look not behind you." That Sodom was to be destroyed did not appear at all likely, for it was a bright morning. They were to fly with as much haste as if they could see the fire-shower falling, but they were not to see it. Their flight was to be urged forward by faith in the angel's words. Faith may be as well exhibited by not looking as by looking. Faith is a look at Christ, but faith is a not looking at the things which are behind. Lot's wife saw the sun rising, so we are told, "The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar." She saw the bright dawning and everything lit up with it and it came across her mind, "It cannot be true. The city is not being destroyed. What a lovely morning! Why are we thus running away from house and goods and friends and everything else on such a bright, clear morning as this?" She did not truly believe—there was no real faith in her heart—and therefore she disobeyed the law of her safety and turned her face towards Sodom. Yet, mark you, she had received the angels in her house; she had seen them blind the wicked mob around her door; she had heard their majestic words of persuasion and felt their kind compulsion—she had plenty of evidence that God was speaking, but she doubted the truth of His word and here was the very essence of her sin. What if some of you that have mingled with the godly—and have been numbered with them and have participated in their worship, should, nevertheless come short because of unbelief! It is by no means improbable, for out of all that came out of Egypt there were only two that entered into Canaan. They could not enter in because of unbelief—their carcasses fell in the wilderness. May it never come to pass with any of us that we shall leave our carcasses outside of the eternal hope because we, too, do not believe in Him who is invisible, but must needs walk according to the sight of the eyes.

Having gotten so far as lingering and doubting, her next movement was a direct act of rebellion—she turned her head—she was bidden not to look, but *she dared to look*. Rebellion is as much seen in the breach of what appears to be a little command as in the violation of a great precept. Our fall at the first came from the plucking of forbidden fruit and this woman's death came by a look! Take care of little things. There is life in a look and here is a case in which there was death in a look. She looked, but why did she look? I suppose it was this—her heart was that way. She loved Sodom and the separated life she abhorred. She had led her husband and her children away from the peculiar people of God, for she felt that she would rather mix with the reprobate multitude than with the chosen few. She was not of the spirit that could walk with God alone—she clung to society and to sin. Though she was running for her life, she thought of her household stuff and of the ease of Sodom and she looked back with a lingering eye because she wanted to be there, and it came to this, that as her eye went back, her whole body would have gone back if time had been allowed. She already lingered. She would soon have turned. That one glance betrayed which way her soul was going. A little thing in professors may show what they are and we may readily betray the inward turning of the soul by an act as simple as that of turning the neck to look towards Sodom. This was her sin.

Now, dear friends, let us remember Lot's wife each one of us by learning a personal lesson. Here is a hard thing—we must go outside the camp or utterly fail. Can you maintain the life of God and walk with Christ and be separate from the world? Many of you cannot. You may pretend to do so, but you cannot, it is beyond you. I fear that the number of true Christians in the world is very much less than we suppose. We are encumbered with a host of people who call themselves Christians, but are as much of the world as other people, whose inheritance is in the world, whose pleasure is in the world, whose speech is worldly, and who are altogether of the world. And because they are of the world, the world loves its own and therefore there is little or no strife between them and the world. Alas, I fear the church is not true to itself and therefore the world begins to love it. It says, "You have come to live with us and do as we do and you do not bear your awkward protests as you used to do and so we need not to burn you as we did your fathers. You are hail fellows, well with us and therefore we will treat you kindly." Only let as live as Christ lived and we shall find the dogs of this world howling at us as they used to do at our forefathers. My hearers, can you live the separated life? If you can, God help you and bless you in it, but if you cannot, recollect though you do not so go into Sodom as to indulge in its grossest sins, yet the very looking at it, the wishing for it, the desiring to be there shows where your heart is and your heart's tendency is your true character. You will be judged according to the going of your heart. If your heart goes toward the mountain to escape and if you hasten to be away with Christ to be His separated follower, you shall be saved, but if your heart still goes after evil and sin, his servants you are whom you obey and from your evil master you shall get your black reward.

IV. Here comes our remembrance of Lot's wife in the fourth and most solemn place and that is—remember that HER DOOM WAS TERRIBLE. "Remember Lot's wife." Remember that she perished with the same doom as that which happened to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah *but that doom befell her at the gates of Zoar*. Oh, if I must be damned, let it be with the mass of the ungodly, having always been one of them, but to get up to the very gates of heaven and to perish there will be a most awful thing! To have lived with God's people, to have been numbered with them, to be joined to them by ties of blood and then after all to perish, will be horrible indeed! To have heard the gospel, to have felt the gospel, too, in a measure, to have amended one's life because of it, to have escaped from the filthiest corruption of the world, and to have become moral and amiable and excellent and yet still not to have been weaned from the world, not to have been clean divorced from sin and so to perish, the thought is intolerable. That same brine and brimstone which fell upon the inhabitants of the four cities overtook Lot's wife. She was on the margin of the shower and as it fell she was salted with tar—she was turned into a pillar of salt where she stood. Dreadful doom! On the verge of mercy to be slain by justice. On the brink of salvation to be the victim of eternal wrath! This came upon her all of a sudden, too. What a picture! She stops as she is flying—she turns her head! She scarcely looks! The gaze is not long enough to single out her own house—and lo, she is

turned into a pillar! The fire-salt has fallen on her! She will never move again! She had not time to start or turn and with her neck just as it was, she stands as a statue of salt—a warning to all who should pass that way. I do not suppose Lot's wife to be standing there now, as some travelers have imagined—the pillar was not even there in Christ's day, for if it had been, as Bengel very properly remarks, our Lord would have said, "See Lot's wife." But as she was not there, He said, "Remember" her. Her doom came on a sudden, without a further warning or a moment's time to consider. What if sudden death should strike some of you down at this moment? You professors who still love the world, what if you now fell dead? You professed Christians who sneak in among the ungodly to have a suck at their pleasures, suppose you should be struck down in the theater one of these days! You that pretend to be Christians and frequent the dance saloon, suppose you should fall dead there! It would not be a new thing under the sun, for God deals severely with those who profess to come under His covenant. He has jealous laws for those who join His church and yet have not the grace of God in their hearts. These men die not the death of common men, but are often overtaken by strange punishments that the world may see that the Lord has set a wall of fire around His church, which none may break through on peril of their lives. Ananias and Sapphira entered the church, but they could not live there—a glance of Peter's eye and they fell dead before him. Such judgments still purge the ranks of the professing church as all that observe must know, for the Lord will be sanctified of them that come near to Him. "For this cause," says the apostle, "some are sickly among you, and many sleep," because the discipline of God goes on in the midst of His visible church. He lets the world alone till the fire-shower comes, but to those that profess to be His people, He is always a jealous God. I speak strong things—strong things are wanted in these compromising days. May the Holy Spirit impress these weighty facts on all your hearts.

The worst point, perhaps, about the perishing of Lot's wife lay in this, that *she perished in the very act of sin* and had no space for repentance given her. In the instant she turned her head, she was a pillar of salt. It is a dreadful thing to die in the very act of sin—to be caught away by the justice of God while the transgression is being perpetrated. Yet such a thing may happen and let those who profess to be Christians and yet parley with sin, "Remember Lot's wife" and how swift God is to deal out His judgment against professors who betray His holy name and cause.

I cannot help going back to the text I started with, which was one of my own making, and that is, "Remember Lot." Though Lot himself was a righteous man and escaped from the doom of the wicked city, yet I cannot help tracing the death of Lot's wife, in some degree, to her husband. When a man walks with God and imitates God, he gets to beget character—that is Abraham. When a man walks with a holy man and imitates *him,* he may rise to be a good character, but he will be a weak one—that is Lot. But when one walks with Lot, the weak character, and only copies him, the result will be a failure—that is Lot's wife. It is like the boy's copy book. If he will copy the top line, the boy makes an Abraham line, but if the next time he does not look at the top line, but imitates the second—

that makes a Lot line—very far short of the first. If he next copies No. 3, the Lot line, the result will be a poor affair—that is Lot's wife. Beloved, we are to live having the perfect Father for our example, looking and following in His steps and if we do so by the power of the Spirit, we shall reach a grand, noble, Abrahamic character. But suppose you get to imitate some good man and he is your standard, you will make a second-rate Christian. It will be a weak affair, like Lot. And then if your wife and children get to copying you, oh, the mischief that must come of it! Lot ought to have been firmer, more steadfast, more thorough. He had no business to have gone to Sodom. If he had said to his wife, "No, my wife, we belong to a chosen people. God called us out of Haran and away from the gods of our fathers that we might live a separated life, and here I am going to stop and you must stop with me." She would have had to obey or even if she had not done so, Lot was not to do evil to please his wife. She could not have learned the ways of Sodom—she might have given her heart still to the world, but she could not have been so clearly mixed up with it and her daughters could not have been so ill-morale as they were if he had resolved to live apart from the town's people. I believe that fathers and husbands ought to take the lead in the management of their families, and parents are bound to arrange their households after a godly fashion. Do not say, "Oh, we cannot manage our families." You must do it. Eli failed in this and instead of being firm, he timidly said, "Do not so, my sons." Poor dear old Eli—he did not like to get into trouble with his sons by finding fault with them. But what did his softness cost him? The Lord smote his family because he had not ordered his household aright. If Christian men leave their families to go anyhow they choose, they will soon find the Lord has a controversy with them and if the children and if the wife should after all perish, it will be a horrible thought for the head of the household, even if he is a saved man, that it was his ill example which caused their ruin. It was partly Lot's own doing that his wife became what she was. If Lot had never gone to Sodom, his wife would not have perished near it. Look to yourselves lest you lead others astray. Keep near to God and you will be blessed and become a blessing to others. Abraham did not have this trouble with Sarah, nor Isaac with Rebekah, for they walked with God and their influence was felt in their tents. Live near to God and let your own life be according to the command which God gave the patriarch, "Walk with Me and be you perfect," and you shall see that He will bless your household and your children after you, but if you do not thus walk before the Lord, you will have to "Remember Lot's wife." May God add His blessing on these words, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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THE FIRST NOTE OF MY SONG
NO. 1492

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 31, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Who forgives all your iniquities."
Psalm 103:3.

I AM a firm believer, not only in the inspiration of the psalms themselves, but also in the correctness of their order. I believe that Paul was right when he called a certain psalm, "the second psalm," and that those are wrong who so disarrange the book as to make it the sixteenth. Anything to certain radicals in theology is better than the established order—they change for change sake. Many attempts have been made to arrange the psalms chronologically and critics have shifted them about at their pleasure, according to this theory or that. Their wisdom is utter folly. The psalms as they stand have an order most appropriate and instructive. If time permitted I could illustrate this in many ways, but for this present it is more in the line of my discourse to observe that we could not have understood so well the hundred and third psalm if we had not first read the thirty-second. You remember how the thirty-second begins? "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity." The pardoned man is blessed and then he blesses God. First the full, deep, effective blessing comes to him freely from the Lord and then he reflects the blessing and exclaims in joyful gratitude, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." First, we are blessed *with* the pardon of sin and then we bless God *for* the pardon of sin. The divine blessing enters our hearts loaded with good things. We gladly receive the heavenly messenger and then it begins to sing like a minstrel at a feast, nor does it long sing alone for all that is within the house of our manhood arouses itself to join in the strain and never is better music made this side the heavenly places than when all that is in us is stirred up to magnify and bless God's holy name. Our text is one stanza of the never-ending "song of loves."

In the verse before us, the most wonderful point to my mind is the attribute of God which David selects for special praise, "All that is within me bless His *holy* name." You might have expected to read "gracious name," or "merciful name," but you find it written "holy name." Indeed, this is the emphatic point of the wonder of forgiven sin, that a holy God should pass it by. If God could wink at iniquity, if there were something in His nature which rendered sin tolerable to Him, it would be a slight thing that He should allow it to go unpunished. But because He is a holy God, righteous, just and pure, who cannot look upon iniquity, whose fury burns against evil, therefore it becomes wonderful even to amazement that He should forgive our iniquities. To accomplish this wonder, the

miracle of the cross was worked by unspeakable love. O man, you have but to gain a true idea of that holiness which is like a consuming fire, that holiness which even angels cannot gaze upon, but of which they sing, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts"—you have but to gain a glimpse of that unutterable perfection and you will abhor yourself in dust and ashes—and then you will marvel to think that the thrice holy should have spared your guilty soul. How abhorrent is your depravity in His sight and yet He does not smite you! What are you but a mass of pollution? And yet the Infinitely Pure has considered you in love. What are you but a sink of impurity? And yet the All-perfect One has looked upon you in compassion. Do you believe in Him and accept of His dear Son? Then grace has looked upon you. Before the glance of love omnipotent, your sin shall disappear and your iniquity shall forever vanish. O blessed deed of boundless mercy! If indeed the royal pardon has been sent to us from the court of heaven, we may right heartily say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name, who forgives all your iniquities."

In these latter days, among the other wonderful things which have been developed, we have been enriched by a school of thinkers who kick against the doctrine of justification by faith and rebel against the idea of the atonement and the forgiveness of sin. The meager gospel which they proclaim to us poor fallen wretches is this—If you do wrong, there is no help for it. You will have to reap the consequences. If you do right, you will of course bring your hearts into a healthier condition and you will be happy in proportion. But if you do wrong, there is no hope for you—there certainly will come upon you the result of evil and you will suffer till you work yourself right. "Do not flatter yourself," say they, "with any idea of grace and mercy interposing—there is either no God, or if there is one, He will take no notice of your prayers, but will let you develop in your own way. The fictions of substitution, imputation, and pardon are mere delusions or pious subterfuges unworthy of rational men." These "men of culture" and "modern thought" are intent upon robbing us of the essence of the gospel, and under cover of enforcing a truth which nobody denies, they undermine the special doctrine for which revelation was given. It is true that upon man's character his true condition depends, but this by no means disproves the interposition of supreme love. Woe to us if their philosophy should be true—and woe to them, also—yea, woe to the whole world if their denial of our best hope should be accepted for truth. As for us, this gracious forgiveness which they deny touches the chief spring of our soul and stirs us with a hope of better things. This very grace which they deprecate as though it were immoral and could not work men towards holiness, is the cause in our soul of hatred of sin and the source of our hearts' noblest aspirations after holiness. Moved by gratitude, we long to honor our pardoning God, who, though He is glorious in holiness, is also glorious in grace when He blots out sin. We would gladly prove by our lives that we have not in vain received this gift of mercy, by letting all men see that we are now dead to sin and cannot live any longer therein. Evangelism does not flatter mere morality by making it the rival of

Christ, but it is the highest promoter of all that is honest, temperate, and of good report, as our daily conversation shall prove.

The grand truth of forgiven sin is our subject at this time. I hope I cannot say anything which will be new to you upon this point, for if I could it would look as if you did not already understand this early privilege of true believers. Many of you understand it and enjoy it and therefore I can only bring to your remembrance old facts. But these, like well-stored and ripe fruit, will be exceedingly sweet. I spread the table not with foreign delicacies and novel dainties, but with the everyday fare of the great Father's house. Our sermon will be simple, but I trust it will be most consoling. It will not display the ability of the speaker, but it will reveal the grace of His Master and this is my heart's desire.

"I believe in the forgiveness of sins," is one of the most blessed sentences of the creed. Dear friends, we do most joyfully believe in it and what is more, we enjoy the truth personally as a matter of fact in our own case. May we feel the joy of it at this good hour. O Holy Spirit, bear witness with the water and the blood.

I. In speaking of the pardon of sin, I shall remark, first, that it is A PRIMARY BLESSING. Observe, it is put first in the catalog given by the psalmist. It is not written, "Who heals all your diseases, who forgives all your iniquities." No, but the list commences thus, "Who forgives all your iniquities." Forgiveness leads the van and stands in the forefront of the host of mercies. When the angels of God meet us, the first messenger of love that comforts our heart brings in his hand pardon for our transgressions. As the olive leaf in the dove's mouth proved to Noah that all the waters were receded, so does a sense of forgiven sin assure us that our great griefs are ended and our liberty and joy has come. Pardon shines first of the stars of mercy.

A main reason for this is the fact that *we never enjoy a mercy as a mercy from God till we receive the forgiveness of sins.* A man lives while his sin is unforgiven. He eats, he drinks, he sleeps, he wakes, and talks about enjoying life—but none of these things are received by him as gifts from God. If he thinks upon God at all, the divine name is a terror to him. He does not eat his bread as though it were given by a Father's hand, nor does he put on his garments as though he were clothed by divine love. That cannot be while he abides under divine anger. The unpardoned sinner is barely able to see God as his Benefactor—as his Father, he knows Him not. God does bestow mercies upon unpardoned men and women, but they cannot receive them as such until, first of all, they come to know that their transgression is forgiven.

Brethren, *there are many mercies which are not given at all and cannot be given until first of all the pardon of sin has been bestowed.* It would be out of place and inconsistent to give the blessings of the covenant to unpardoned sinners. For instance, why should God heal the diseases of a man under condemnation for sin? It is but a scant mercy which would seek the health of a man condemned to die—by all means relieve his pain, but his disease you may let alone. We cannot expect God to crown a man with loving-kindness and tender mercies while still he is dead in

sin and lives in daily dread of a second death—a death eternal. A coronation for a condemned criminal would be a superfluity of inconsistency. To crown a hardened convict who lies in the cell of Newgate awaiting his execution would be a wretched mockery. How could it be that God should wreathe a chaplet of favors for a man who has refused His mercy and willfully abides under His wrath on account of unconfessed and unpardoned sin? How could our spiritual youth be renewed like the eagle's or our mouth be satisfied with good things while as yet we are doomed to die and are withering away in our wickedness? What are good things to a tortured conscience and what is renewed youth to a soul racked by remorse? No, pardoned sin must clear the road for the march of grace—this jungle of iniquity must be removed to make a highway for our God. The application of the blood of sprinkling must be felt. The cleansing power of the atonement must be known or the rest of the blessings of the covenant will never reach us.

And well may the Lord place this mercy first because when it comes, it ensures all the rest. The forgiveness of sin is the day-dawn, which is always followed by the clearer light. God does not pardon us and then leave us to perish of our spiritual diseases, but when once He grants a plenary absolution, then His Spirit exercises His healing art and recovers us of the leprosy of sin. When the Lord forgives all our iniquities, it is not long before we perceive that our life is redeemed from destruction, crowned with loving-kindness, and satisfied with good things to the renewal of its youth. Pardon never comes alone—troops of blessings attend it. The voice of the turtle dove, which speaks peace because of pardoned sin, also tells that the rain is over and gone and that the fruits of the Spirit will soon appear. He who gave His Son's blood to wash us will withhold no good thing from us. He who has said to us, "Your sins are forgiven you," has given us a grant of all needful good in that one sentence of His love. Like the comet nucleus, which bears a streaming train of light behind it, so does forgiveness draw along with it a far-reaching glory of boundless favor. Well may this blessing be set first since it carries all the rest in its loins—

"When dreadful guilt is done away
No other fears we know.
That hand which scatters pardons down,
Shall crowns of life bestow."

There is this, also, to be thought of, that the pardon of sin comes first *that it may be seen to be an act of pure grace*. If any other blessing had preceded it, our legal spirits would have dreamed of merit and fitness—if any attainment had been reached by us before the forgiveness of sins was given, we might have been tempted to glory in self—but now we perceive that God forgives our sins before He heals our moral diseases and therefore there is no room for pride to set her foot. While the man is still white with the leprosy of sin, the Lord visits him in pity to show that He looks for nothing in man as the motive power of His love.

While yet the sinner has his judgment perverted, his affections polluted, and his desires depraved, even while he is full of the plague of his own heart, God says to him, "I have forgiven you." This, therefore, is pure

grace and is set in the foreground that its sovereignty and freeness may be written before our eyes as with a sunbeam. God pardons men as sinners just as He finds them, notwithstanding that they have nothing to recommend them to Him. Their disease is so foul, indeed, that they might have been spurned for their loathsomeness if it were not for His boundless love. But seeing them plunged in evil and dead in sin, He magnifies His mercy by quickening them to new life and forgiving them all their trespasses.

Brethren, on this first head I want to be very practical and say to you—let us seek this forgiveness of sin as a primary blessing if we have not yet obtained it. If the Holy Spirit puts it first, let us seek it first. Be wise, O you who feel your guilt, and do not go about first of all to make a reformation in yourselves and then to come to God for mercy. But come first to Him and then see after other things. When you come to Him, do not ask Him to first heal your soul's disease, but first to forgive your iniquities. Follow God's order and you cannot go amiss. There is infinite wisdom in all the Lord's arrangements. Do not, I pray you, try to make that first which God makes second, nor that second which God makes first. You are guilty, ask for pardon at the outset. Through Jesus Christ a free pardon is proclaimed, pardon for sins of the deepest dye, pardon bought and sealed with His atoning blood. Come and receive it just as you are. Though there is nothing in you to commend you to the divine regard, you are now in just such a state as best prepares you for His sovereign grace. Are you startled at this statement? It is neither more nor less than the truth. You are empty, therefore there is room in you for the fullness of divine mercy. You are polluted, therefore there is opportunity to show the power of the blood in cleansing you. You are guilty and there is space for undeserved mercy. Plead your guiltiness and say, "Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great." Do not urge any extenuation, but as you are guilty, say, "Forgive me." In your confessed guiltiness there is space for the great King to do as He wills and put away your sin by a sovereign act of mercy. Let your first desire be pardoned sin. Do not wait till first you understand all mysteries, but get your sins forgiven. Do not first labor to attain a perfect life—get your sins forgiven. Do not first make a profession and join a church and put on outward religiousness. Get your sins forgiven. There David's psalm begins and there yours must began if God in love accepts it, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name; who forgives all your iniquities." That is our first head. Pardon is the primary blessing—seek it as such.

II. Forgiveness is A PRESENT BLESSING. This is very apparent in the text, which is in the present tense, "Who *forgives* all your iniquities." Not, "Who will, perhaps, forgive you on your death bed." Not, "Who did forgive you years ago and now condemns you." No, it is, "Who forgives"—is now forgiving daily, hourly, momentarily—is continually forgiving your iniquity.

I want to bring this fact of a present blessing before your minds briefly, but very clearly. This privilege the believer has *actually obtained*—all his sins are forgiven at this moment of time. Blessed be the name of the

Lord, we are even now washed from sin. We shall grow in grace, but we shall never be more completely pardoned than when we first believed. We shall one day stand before the glorious presence of God in His own sacred courts and see the Well-Beloved and wear His likeness, but we shall not even then be more perfectly forgiven than we are at this present moment. Sin depresses our spirit—the consciousness of it often makes us weep in secret and yet none of it is imputed to us—every grain of it is as far removed from us as the east is from the west. Rejoice, believer, that the Spirit bears this witness, "God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you." As many as have looked to Christ upon the cross are now justified by faith and have peace with God. They are at this moment cleansed from all sin through the application of the precious blood of Christ. This is a matter of present fact and not of mere hope.

According to the text this present mercy is *perpetually bestowed*—He still forgives our iniquity—there is perpetuity in it. At this very moment I may be mourning my sin, but God is forgiving it. Alas, I may be sinning, for even in the holiest deeds we do there is still sin—but even then God is still forgiving. If indeed you are a believer in Jesus Christ, the Lord is at all times forgiving you. As constant as your sin, so constant is His forgiveness. Never fall into the notion of some that the one forgiveness which we received at the first has rendered it unnecessary for us to seek new forgiveness and unnecessary for us to offer new confession. It is not so. The Lord is always forgiving and it is for us to still be seeking that blessing. We ask each day for daily bread though the promise has made it sure, and so must we daily seek mercy, though it is already promised. Our Lord said, "After this manner also pray you," and a part of that prayer is, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." I know that certain brethren say that the Lord's prayer is not for believers, but their dictum in such a case is not worth the breath they waste in delivering it. I am quite satisfied, for one, to pray as my Lord taught me. If they prefer to pray as their whims teach them, it is at their own risk. Besides, I read that we are to confess our sins one to another—and sins to another are certainly sins towards God. If, then, we are to confess to our fellow men the wrongs which we have done to them, it will take a great deal of reasoning to convince me that we are not to confess the wrongs which we do towards our heavenly Father. There should be daily confession, for even, "if we walk in the light as God is in the light"—and that is a very high condition—and if we have fellowship with God clearly and distinctly, yet even then we shall need to have the blood of Jesus Christ cleansing us from all sin. We still sin even when walking in the light and still need that Jesus should cleanse us by His blood. Herein is our consolation, that Jesus is always cleansing us, "He forgives all your iniquities." You are often sinning, but He is always forgiving you. You are often wandering, often erring, often grieving Him, but "He forgives all your iniquities." I do not feel like preaching when I touch this text. I heartily wish I could sit down and have a happy cry over this blessed truth—that my God is at this moment forgiving me. Oh, poor heart, you have much to chide yourself for, but your Lord forgives you!

You are a frail, foolish, unstable, selfish, wayward thing, but He forgives you!

Whatever your faults, known and unknown, He is forgiving you now. Even while you are lamenting your many transgressions, He is casting them behind His back and hurling them into the depths of the sea. While I speak to you with my voice, my own heart is singing inwardly, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgives all your iniquities."

Beloved brethren, this mercy of pardon is *knowingly received*. We know that we are forgiven. "Presumption," says one. Simply truth, say I. Do you think David would say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who may or may not have forgiven me"? Ah, no. He speaks of favors which he had consciously received. Nobody ever sings over uncertain blessings. I say again, nobody ever sings over an uncertain pardon. A doubt as to our forgiveness is fatal to all joy, for it lets in the dread fear of divine wrath. Absolute certainty must be realized before a heart can make a sonnet concerning the forgiveness of sin. When by faith we accept the Lord Jesus to be our all in all, we are as clear about God's having forgiven us our sin as we are about our having committed them. Upon our believing, we have as good evidence of being cleansed as we had of having been foul. Our sense of guilt arises from our knowledge of the law and that is clear. But our sense of forgiveness comes from our knowledge of the gospel—and that is equally clear. I am not sure that I was condemned if there is a question about the law. But there is no question and as a sinner, I am condemned. In the same way, I am not assuredly absolved if there is a question about the gospel—but as there is no question about the gospel, I am assuredly absolved because I believe in Jesus. Resting in Christ and trusting alone in Him, you and I may have a present conscious sense of pardon—we may know our forgiveness and be beyond doubt concerning it. God bring us to that happy condition.

Then, brethren, this present blessing is *immediately efficient*, for it secures us a present right to all that is involved in being pardoned. If a man is forgiven his offenses, he has peace towards God. He has boldness to enjoy access to God and reason to expect that his petitions will be answered. The stone which was lying at the door blocking his acceptance is now rolled way. He is a justified man and he is accepted in the Beloved. God treats him as just and rewards him as such. The man is free from guilt, for God has absolved him. He is worthy in the sight of the great Judge of all the earth. "Being justified by faith" we have—all, my brethren—we have not only what the apostle tells us, but we have untold blessings. We have time and eternity, life and death, earth and heaven, Christ and God. These are our own now. We have a present portion in all the covenant promises and provisions.

The practical point is this—if this forgiveness of sin is a present blessing, seek for it today. Seek it at once. Do not be satisfied unless you are forgiven now. Do not be satisfied unless you are forgiven every day and all the day. Do not put off your soul with a bare hope, but labor for certainty. Do not foolishly postpone it in the mere chance that at the last pinch, when you come to die, you may be forgiven, but cry for it now.

Why, man alive, if I knew I could gain pardon when I came to die I should not like to spend the interval without it. It is such a privilege to be forgiven that I want it at once and cannot endure delay. Oh, the sense of pardoned sin! What sweetness! What rest!

I know its rapture in my own heart—it is my support and my delight—making my heart to be all music and dancing. We, at this present hour, joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have received the atonement. I charge you, do not postpone this matter—why should you put off a joy? O repenting sinner, believe that you can have forgiveness through Christ Jesus and you shall have it. Going to God through Jesus Christ with a humble confession of your sin, you shall today enjoy the Father's kiss of reconciliation and your conscience shall be thoroughly purged from the least taint of sin. May the Holy Spirit work this present sense of forgiveness in you all.

III. Thirdly, this is a PERSONAL BLESSING. I cannot resist the tendency in reading to lay the stress upon the word, *"your."* "Who forgives all *your* iniquities." Our Lord is a blessed God to forgive anybody, but that He should forgive me is the greatest feat of His mercy. A good brother wrote me the other day, "Mercy had reached its zenith when it saved *me*." He thought so of himself and we may each one think the same of his own case—

"'Tis grace, 'tis glorious grace indeed,
Grace without parallel.
Great! But how great! Does far exceed
The power of speech to tell."

You can all rejoice that God forgives iniquity, but your rejoicing will never reach so high as when you know that He forgives all your iniquity. Honey is not sweet except to him that tastes it.

"But may we know this personally?" says one. I answer, "Yes." Some of us know that God has forgiven us, *because we have the character which He describes* as being forgiven. He forgives those who confess their sin, "If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We have made confession before His face and we believe His Word and are, therefore, sure that He has cleansed us. He has promised mercy to those who forsake their sins. Having forsaken our sins, we look to be forgiven for Christ's sake. Forgiveness is also freely promised to those who look to Jesus for it. We are looking to Him and we are forgiven. Are you not believers? Then there is no hope for you—but if you are trusting alone in Jesus Christ, your iniquity is blotted out. He that believes is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses. In repentance, in confession of sin, in forsaking sin, and in faith in our Lord Jesus, we have the marks of pardoned sinners and these marks are apparent in our souls.

Moreover, brethren, if you have any doubt about whether the Lord forgives you now, it will be well for you to make sure that you *accept His way of salvation*. It is by faith in His dear Son. Do you want any other way? He forgives because Jesus stood in the sinner's place and He puts the sinner into Christ's place. Are you satisfied with that great plan of salvation by substitution, by atonement, by sacrifice? "Oh," I hear you

say, "Satisfied with it! I am delighted with it. It is all my salvation and all my desire." Then, if you have accepted what God sets before you, it is not possible that He should refuse you the blessing which He has promised. What says the Scripture? "Through His name whosoever believes in Him shall receive remission of sins." As sure as you have received Christ, your sin is removed from you. It cannot be that a man has Christ and has his sin, too, for his iniquity must be covered to whom Christ is all in all. Yes, we have this pardon personally and pleasantly, for we believe in Jesus. Do you not believe *in the divine word and testimony concerning the pardon of sin*? Have you not heard the Lord God declare that His Son has forever put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself? What better evidence do you need than the infallible word? Do you look for feelings, signs, tokens, or other things to corroborate the witness of your God? Is He an unreliable witness? Is not His word enough, alone and by itself? It is so to those that have believed and it ought to be so to all men. For my own part, I had rather venture my soul upon one word of God in the sacred Scriptures than upon all the whispers of angels that men have ever heard, all the visions that men have ever seen, and all the ecstasies of delight that saints have ever felt. All the world, all the church, and all heaven put together cannot make up the weight of one sentence of God's Word.

One truth I would like to mention. It is this—we know that we are at this moment forgiven, because *we at this moment give to the Lord Jesus Christ that look which brings forgiveness*. I will put aside all the past. I will put aside all our experience, all the change of heart which we hope we have undergone, and I will put the matter altogether apart from the past. If I never did look to You, Immanuel, crucified for me, I look to You now! If I have never rested in You before, I will rest in You now—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind arms I fall.
Be You my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

Oh, then, we are forgiven. We must be forgiven. Never a soul did give that look without finding forgiveness of sin as surely as the Israelite found healing when he looked to the brazen serpent. So, beloved, if that is the case, I want you to view this blessing as a personal possession and seek it as such. I would to God that all of you that hear me would seek personal forgiveness at this moment. Do not think of the preacher or the heavy style in which he sets forth this truth, but think of yourself and your personal need of cleansing. Think nothing just now of those that sit at your side, but seek for mercy at the hand of God, each man, each woman, each child for himself or herself. Pardon is to be had—rest not till you have it. It will not avail you if all the rest of the congregation should be pardoned if sin should remain upon you. Breathe, then, the personal prayer to a personal Savior, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Trust in Christ for yourself and you shall sing today, "Who forgives all my iniquities." Blessed be His name.

IV. I have now a fourth point to call your attention to and that is—this is A PERFECT BLESSING. "Who forgives *all* your iniquities." For, recollect, the forgiveness spoken of in the text is a divine one. It is God that

forgives all our iniquities. A man's forgiveness, when we have wronged him, is to be sought and when we get it, we shall find in many instances that it is a poor, half-hearted affair. Men often say they forgive, "but"—now that very hesitation in their speech shows it is not a full and free forgiveness. But when God does anything, He does it thoroughly. Now, listen, just this minute. When God charges sin upon a man He does it after a very high standard, for every idle word that man shall speak he shall be brought into judgment. When God condemns man, He does it after an equally elevated standard and when God punishes man, He does it after a solemn and awful manner. The new gods that have lately come up have a little hell because they are little gods—but my God, the God of the whole earth—has a great hell and a fearful doom, for what He does is done by rule of strict justice. Believe me, He pardons to the same scale. All His acts are of a sublime character. The standard of punishment is the standard of forgiveness. You know how He judges, how He condemns, how He punishes—after that same thorough, Godlike manner He does forgive. He makes a clean sweep of sin, according to that blessed word, "The day comes, says the Lord, when the sin of Jacob shall be sought for and it shall not be found: yes, it shall not be, says the Lord." "I will subdue all their iniquities, and cast their transgressions into the depths of the sea." "I have blotted out your iniquities as a thick cloud, and as a cloud your sins." "They shall not be mentioned against you any more, forever." Oh, it is a perfect blessing, for it is a divine pardon and you see its completeness is expressed in that word, "all." "Who forgives all your iniquities." He does not remove the great ones and leave the little ones to rankle—not the little ones and leave one great black one to devour us, but "all" of them He covers and annihilates with the effectual atonement made by His dear Son.

And then notice the word which in our text expresses sin—"iniquities." Pull it to pieces—it is in-equities—the matters in which we are not according to equity. Sometimes we fall short. Sometimes we go beyond. Sometimes we do not act in equity towards our friends, our relatives, or strangers. Constantly we do not act in strict equity towards God. Now, He says, all our in-equities—everything in which we fall short of the perfect rule of equity or go beyond that rule—all these He forgives. What a blessed, comprehensive word this is. I was reading the other day in a very delightful little book, entitled, "Never Say 'Die,'" which is admirably calculated to comfort a seeking soul, these few words which struck me forcibly. The writer says, "All our righteousness are as filthy rags. If you will bring your good living and your precious righteousness to Christ, *you must make sin of the whole lot*—there is nothing else you can do with it—and ask to have it all forgiven. The man who will be saved by his own righteousness says hopelessly, 'Die,' to his own soul. You must cast all this splendid rubbish of yours *on the heap* along with the oaths and the lies, the drinking and Sabbath-breakings, and the foul living, and let the ever-flowing stream that keeps eddying round wash it all away." As I read it, I thought—That is what I will do with mine. I will put my sermons, my prayers, my almsgiving—everything on the same heap as my sins and let

them go together. Lord, be pleased to forgive all mine in-equities, my good works and my bad works. I might have tried to sort them a little, but one is so much like the other that I fling them all overboard and swim to glory on the cross. We have no hope but in our Lord Jesus—we need pardoning mercy for all we have ever done—for sin has been mixed with it all. I advise you, my hearer, to put the whole life you have lived into one lump and say, "Lord, forgive me the whole of it. I cannot acknowledge every sin, for I do not know them all. Sin is such a subtle thing that it has penetrated into my most holy thoughts and desires, but Lord, cleanse me from all sin through the atoning blood."

"Who forgives all your iniquities." What a blessed thing is this. For when God once forgives, He forgives forever. He never plays fast and loose and He never brings to mind again that of which He has said, "I will remember it no more." O my brethren, if you are pardoned once, you are forgiven once and for all. Irreversible acquittals God bestows, "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Immutability is stamped upon the patent of our pardon. Until God can change or lie, He never will bring to mind again the sin of that man whom He has pardoned. "Your sins are forgiven you—go in peace."

Now, I want you, practically, to use this head by seeking to obtain this pardon as a complete thing. Hosts of professing Christians never reach to this. Many of you do not believe that you are or can be completely pardoned. But such pardon is possible. Do not rest till you have it. You will never know true peace of mind until it is yours. The Roman Catholic cannot believe that God pardons him altogether and he never knows that he is safe. It is a very poor thing you gain by being a Roman Catholic. If you get the best you can, you go to purgatory when you die. It is great cry and very little wool. But in the faith of Jesus Christ you get present pardon. However great our cry is, it is never equal to the wool, for what a great blessing it is to receive immediate, absolute, eternal salvation on the spot, so that if you live as long as Methuselah, the transgressions of all those years are covered and if you die at once, all your offenses are put away through the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Seek for this heavenly gift. Do not rest till you are as sure of perfect forgiveness as of your own existence—and when you have this glorious gift of grace say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgives all your iniquities."

V. In the fifth place, this is a PRICELESS BLESSING. It is a blessing which could not be purchased by a life of holiness. If we have once committed sin and should henceforth be absolutely spotless, yet our previous sin would absolutely condemn us—

"Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone,
You must save and You alone."

Put on a hair shirt and an iron girdle. Fast day and night. Cover yourself with the bruises of your scourging. Starve as a mendicant or shut yourself up in a hermitage, but the sin of the past will remain the same. Weep tears of blood, but their crimson will not wash out the crimson of your sin. That spot, that blood-red spot upon the soul defies removal.

Wash it with your heart's blood and it would still be there. Though you could turn to red every wave that breaks upon the either shore and fill the Atlantic with a crimson flood, though you should gather all the seas that ever flowed together and wash and wash with niter and much soap till you had polluted all the ocean with your filth—it would still remain. In vain you cry, "Out, damning spot." The spot abides and will abide unless Almighty love shall take it out forever. Only God Himself can forgive and by Him no price can be accepted in the form of future obedience, for all that you can promise is already due and the promise itself will be broken.

What is more, this forgiveness could not be purchased by an eternity of suffering in hell. There they lie in anguish, which God grant we may never know, but they are as far off from the expiation of their sin as when they first came there. When the world grows grey and sun and moon die out and time has spun its utmost thread, the last will be as far off from the expiation of their sin as ever. There is no getting rid of sin by suffering. Still must the lost suffer, for still their sin remains. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment," as surely as the righteous go away into eternal life.

But though it could not be purchased by a life of holiness nor by an eternity of woe, forgiveness has been procured. This pardon which is freely preached today to all who believe in Jesus has been purchased and there is He that procured it, sitting at the right hand of God the Father—a man like unto ourselves—but yet equal with the ever-blessed One. If you ask me how He procured forgiveness, I answer that He shows His hands, the scars are there. He shows His feet. He shows His side—the scars of His wounds are there. He shows His heart that was broken for our guilt. He shows His blessed person which underwent the baptism of divine wrath that He might deliver us from being plunged into those tremendous deeps. O Son of God, You have redeemed us, but what a price have You paid in the bloody sweat of Your face and the sorrowful breaking of Your heart, and now today we accept freely, gladly, what You have so dearly earned.

What else do we say? Why, that if we are pardoned through such an atonement, then are we Christ's forever. We ought to show deep gratitude and the least we can do is to confess, "We are not our own." We ought to go out singing with all our heart, "He has put away my transgressions and covered my iniquities." The Lord grant it may be so, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST
NO. 1493

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For 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."
2 Corinthians 4:6.

THE apostle is explaining the reason for his preaching Christ with so much earnestness—he had received divine light and he felt bound to spread it. One great motive power of a true ministry is trusteeship. The Lord has put us in trust with the gospel; He has filled us with a treasure with which we are to enrich the world. The text explains in full what it is with which the Lord has entrusted us—He has bestowed upon us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and it is ours to reflect the light, to impart the knowledge, to manifest the glory, to point to the Savior's face, and to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Having such a work before us, we faint not, but press onward with our whole heart.

I. With no other preface than this we shall ask your attention this morning, first, TO THE SUBJECT OF THAT KNOWLEDGE in which Paul delighted so much. What was this knowledge which to his mind was the chief of all and the most worthy to be spread? It was the knowledge *of God*—truly a most needful and proper knowledge for all God's creatures. For a man not to know his Maker and Ruler is deplorable ignorance indeed. The proper study of mankind is God. Paul not only knew that there is a God, for he had known that before his conversion—none can more surely believe in the Godhead than did Paul as a Jew. Nor does he merely intend that he had learned somewhat of the character of God, for that also he had known from the Old Testament Scriptures before he was met with on the way to Damascus. Now he had come to know God in a closer, clearer, and surer way, for he had seen Him incarnate in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle had also received the knowledge of "*the glory of God.*" Never had the God of Abraham appeared so glorious as now. God in Christ Jesus had won the adoring wonder of the apostle's instructed mind. He had known Jehovah's glory as the One and only God. He had seen that glory in creation, declared by the heavens and displayed upon the earth. He had beheld that glory in the law which blazed from Sinai and shed its insufferable light upon the face of Moses. But now, beyond all else, he had come to perceive *the glory of God in the face, or person, of Jesus Christ* and this had won his soul. This special knowledge had been com-

municated to him at his conversion when Jesus spoke to him out of heaven. In this knowledge he had made great advances by experience and by new revelations, but he had not yet learned it to the full, for he was still seeking to know it perfectly by the teaching of the divine Spirit and we find him saying, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."

Paul knew not merely God, but God in Christ Jesus. Not merely "the glory of God," but "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The knowledge dealt with God, but it was Christward knowledge. He pined not for a Christless Theism, but for God in Christ. This, beloved, is the one thing which you and I should aim to know. There are parts of the divine glory which will never be seen by us in this life, speculate as we may. Mysticism would desire to pry into the unknowable—you and I may leave dreamers and their dreams and follow the clear light which shines from the face of Jesus. What of God it is needful and beneficial for us to know, He has revealed in Christ and whatsoever is not there, we may rest assured it is unfit and unnecessary for us to know. Truly the revelation is by no means scant, for there is vastly more revealed in the person of Christ than we shall be likely to learn in this mortal life—and even eternity will not be too long for the discovery of all the glory of God which shines forth in the person of the word made flesh. Those who would supplement Christianity had better first add to the brilliance of the sun or the fullness of the sea. As for us, we are more than satisfied with the revelation of God in the person of our Lord Jesus and we are persuaded of the truth of His words, "he that has seen Me has seen the Father."

Hope not, my brethren, that the preacher can grapple with such a subject. I am overcome by it. In my meditations, I have felt lost in its lengths and breadths. My joy is great in my theme and yet I am conscious of a pressure upon brain and heart, for I am as a little child wandering among the mountains or as a lone spirit which has lost its way among the stars. I stumble among sublimities. I sink with amazement. I can only point with my finger to that which I see, but cannot describe it. May the Holy Spirit Himself take of the things of Christ and show them unto you.

We will, for a minute or two, consider this glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ historically. In every incident of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, the Lord's anointed, there is much of God to be seen. What volumes upon volumes might be written to show God as revealed in every act of Christ from His birth to His death! I see Him as a babe at Bethlehem lying in a manger and there I perceive a choice glory in the mind of God, for He evidently despises the pomp and glory of the world which little minds esteem so highly. He might have been born in marble halls and wrapped in imperial purple, but He scorns these things and in the manger among the oxen, we see a glory which is independent of the trifles of luxury and parade. The glory of God in the person of Jesus asks no aid from the splendor of courts and palaces. Yet even as a babe He reigns and rules. Mark how the shepherds hasten to salute the new-born King, while the magi from the far-off East bring gold, frankincense, and myrrh

and bow at His feet. When the Lord condescends to show Himself in little things, He is still right royal and commands the homage of mankind. He is as majestic in the minute as in the magnificent, as royal in the babe at Bethlehem as in later days in the man who rode through Jerusalem with hosannas. See the holy child Jesus in the temple when He is but twelve years old, sitting in the midst of the doctors, astonishing them with His questions! What wisdom there was in that child! Do you not see therein an exhibition of the truth that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men"? Even when God reserves His wisdom and gives forth utterances fit for a child, He baffles the wisdom of age and thought. Watch that youth in the carpenter's shop. See Him planing and sawing, cutting and squaring, working according to His parent's commands, till he is thirty years of age. What do we learn here when we see the incarnate God tarrying at the workman's bench? See we not how God can wait? Is not this a masterly display of the leisure of the Eternal? The Infinite is never driven out of His restful pace of conscious strength. Had it been you and I, we should have hastened to begin our lifework long before. We could not have refrained from preaching and teaching for so long a period. But God can wait and in Christ, we see how prudence tempered zeal and made Him share in that eternal leisure which arises out of confidence that His end is sure. The Godhead was concealed at Bethlehem and Nazareth from the eyes of carnal men, but it is revealed to those who have spiritual sight with which to behold the Lord. Even in those early days of our Lord, while yet He was preparing for His great mission, we behold the glory of God in His youthful face and we adore.

As for His public ministry, how clearly the Godhead is there! Behold Him, brethren, while He feeds five thousand with a few loaves and fishes and you cannot fail to perceive therein the glory of God in the commissariat of the universe, for the Lord God opens His hands and supplies the lack of every living thing. See Him cast out devils and you learn of the divine power over evil. Hear Him raise the dead and reverence the divine prerogative to kill and to make alive. See Him cure the sick and you think you hear Jehovah say, "I wound, I heal." Hear how He speaks and infallibly reveals the truth and you will perceive the God of knowledge to whom the wise-hearted owe their instruction. Set over against each other these two sentences, "Behold, God exalts by His power; who teaches like Him?" and "Never man spoke like this man." It is always the Lord's way to make His truth known to those of humble and truthful hearts and so did Jesus teach the sincere and lowly among men. Observe how Jesus dwelt among men, wearing the common smock-frock of the peasant, entering their cottages and sharing their poverty. Mark how He even washed His disciples' feet. Herein we see the condescension of God who must stoop to view the skies and bow to see what angels do and yet He does not disdain to visit the sons of men. In wondrous grace He thinks of us and has pity upon our low estate. See, too, the Christ of God, my brethren, bearing every day with the taunts of the ungodly, enduring "such contradiction of sinners against Himself," and you have a fair picture of the infinite patience and the marvelous longsuffering of God. And this is no small part of His glory.

Note well how Jesus loved His own which were in the world, yes, loved them to the end and with what tenderness and gentleness He bore with them, as a nurse with her child, for here you see the tenderness and gentleness of God and the love of the great Father towards His erring children. You read of Jesus receiving sinners and eating with them and what is this but the Lord God, merciful and gracious, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin? You see Jesus living as a physician among those diseased by sin, with the one aim of healing their sicknesses—and here you see the pardoning mercy of our God, His delight in salvation, and the joy which He has in mercy. Beloved, I cannot go through the whole life of Jesus Christ—it is impossible, for time would fail us—but if you will yourselves select any single incident in which Jesus appears, whether in the chamber of sickness or at the grave, whether in weakness or in power, you shall in each case behold the glory of God. Throughout His ministry, which was mainly a period of humiliation, there gleams forth in the character, acts, and person of Jesus the glory of the everlasting Father. His acts compel us not only to admire but to adore. He is not merely a man whom God favors, He is God Himself.

What shall I say of His death? Oh never did the love of God reveal itself so clearly as when He laid down His life for His sheep, nor did the justice of God ever flame forth so conspicuously as when He would suffer in Himself the curse for sin rather than sin should go unpunished and the law should be dishonored. Every attribute of God was focused at the cross and he that has eyes to look through his tears and see the wounds of Jesus shall behold more of God there than a whole eternity of providence or an infinity of creation shall ever be able to reveal to him. Well might the trembling centurion, as he watched the cross, exclaim, "Truly, this was the Son of God."

Shall I need to remind you, too, of the glory of God in the person of Christ Jesus in His resurrection, when He spoiled principalities and powers, led death captive, and rifled the tomb. That is indeed a godlike speech, "I am He that lives and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore and have the keys of hell and of death." His power, His immortality, His eternal majesty all shone forth as He left the shades of death.

I will not linger over His ascension when He returned to His own again. Then His Godhead was conspicuous, for He again put on the glory which He had with the Father before ever the world was. There, amid the acclamations of angels and redeemed spirits, the glory of the conquering Lord was seen. By His descent, He had destroyed the powers of darkness and then He ascended that He might fill all things as only God can do.

I would only hint at His session at the right hand of God, for there you know how—

"Adoring saints around Him stand,
And thrones and powers before Him fall.
The God shines gracious through the Man,
And sheds sweet glories on them all."

In heaven they never conceive of Jesus apart from the divine glory which perpetually surrounds Him. No one in heaven doubts His deity, for all fall prostrate before Him or immediately all seize their harps and wake their strings to the praise of God and the Lamb.

The glory of God will most abundantly be seen in the second advent of our Lord. Whatever of splendor we may expect at the advent, whatever of glory shall surround that reign of a thousand years, or the end when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father—in every transaction which prophecy leads us to expect, God in Christ Jesus will be conspicuous and angelic eyes shall look on with adoring admiration as they see the eternal Father glorious in the person of His Son. These are great themes—we do but indicate them and leave them to your quiet thought. It is enough to point to a table if men have appetites for food.

But now I will ask you to think of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, in the same line of thought, only putting it in another fashion. Treat it *by way of observation*. When you look upon the material universe you can see, if your eyes are opened, somewhat of the glory of God. The reverent mind perceives enough to constrain the heart to worship and yet after awhile it pines for more. I have often heard the earth spoken of as the mirror of God's image, but when I was traveling among the Alps and saw many of the grandest phenomena of creation, such as glacier, avalanche, and tempest, I was so impressed with the narrowness of visible things in comparison with God that I wrote such lines as these—

"The mirror of the creatures lacks space
To bear the image of the Infinite.
'Tis true the Lord has fairly writ His name,
And set His seal upon creation's brow,
But as the skillful potter much excels
The vessel which he fashions on the wheel,
E'en so, but in proportion greater far,
Jehovah's self transcends His noblest works.
Earth's ponderous wheels would break, her axles snap,
If freighted with the load of Deity.
Space is too narrow for the Eternal's rest,
And time too short a footstool for His throne."

If your mind has ever entered into communion with God, you will become conscious of the dwarfing of all visible things in His presence. Even when your thought sweeps round the stars and circumnavigates space, you feel that heaven, even the heaven of heavens, cannot contain Him. Everything conceivable falls short of the inconceivable glory of God. When you come, however, to gaze upon the face of Christ Jesus, how different is the feeling! Now you have a mirror equal to the reflection of the eternal face, for "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." His name is "Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God." He is the image of God, "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person." If your conception of Christ is truthful, it will coincide with the true idea of God and you will exclaim, "This is the true God and eternal life." Like Thomas, you will salute the wounded Savior with the cry, "My Lord and my God." Truly, "God was manifest in the flesh"—not a part of Him, but God in perfection.

In the visible creation, we see God's works, but in Christ Jesus, we have God Himself, Emmanuel, "God with us." The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is most sweetly conspicuous because you are conscious that not only are God's attributes there, but God Himself is there.

In the person of Jesus, we see the glory of God in *the veiling of His splendor*. The Lord is not eager to display Himself, "Verily You are a God that hides Yourself," said the prophet of old. The world seems to be created rather to hide God than to manifest Him, at least it is certain that even in the grandest displays of His power we may say with Job, "There was the hiding of His power." Though His light is brightness itself, yet it is only the robe which conceals Him. "Who covers Yourself with light as with a garment." If thus God's glory is seen in the field of creation as a light veiled and shaded to suit the human eye, we certainly see the like in the face of Jesus Christ. Where everything is mild and gentle—full of grace as well as truth. How softly breaks the divine glory through the human life of Jesus—a babe in grace may gaze upon this brightness without fear. When Moses' face shone, the people could not look thereon, but when Jesus came from His transfiguration, the people ran to Him and saluted Him. Everything is attractive in God in Christ Jesus. In Him we see God to the full, but the Deity so mildly beams through the medium of human flesh that mortal man may draw near and look and live. This glory in the face of Jesus Christ is assuredly the glory of God, even though veiled, for thus in every other instance does God in measure shine forth. In providence and in nature such a thing as an unveiled God is not to be seen and the revelation of God in Christ is after the same divine manner.

In our Lord Jesus we see the glory of God *in the wondrous blending of the attributes*. Behold His mercy, for He dies for sinners. But see His justice, for He sits as judge of the quick and the dead. Observe His immutability, for He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and see His power, for His voice shakes not only earth but also heaven. See how infinite is His love, for He espouses His chosen, but how terrible His wrath, for He consumes His adversaries. All the attributes of Deity are in Him—power that can lull the tempest—and tenderness that can embrace little children. The character of Christ is a wonderful combination of all perfection's making up one perfection and so we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, for this is God's glory, that in Him nothing is excessive and nothing is deficient. He is all that is good and great—in Him is light and no darkness at all. Say, is it not so seen in Jesus our Lord?

When I think of God I am led to see His glory *in the outgoing of His great heart,* for He is altogether unselfish and unsparingly communicative. We may conceive a period when the Eternal dwelt alone and had not begun to create. He must have been inconceivably blessed, but He was not content to be enwrapped within Himself and to enjoy perfect bliss alone. He began to create and probably formed innumerable beings long before this world came into existence—and He did this that He might multiply beings capable of happiness. He delighted to indulge His heart by deeds of beneficence, manifesting the inherent goodness of His nature. In whatever God is doing, He is consulting the happiness of His creatures, being in Himself independent of all, He loves to bless others. He is living—we speak with awe in His presence—He is living, even He, not unto Himself, but living in the lives of others, rejoicing in the joy of His creatures. This is His glory and is it not to be seen most evidently in

Christ Jesus, who "saved others, Himself He could not save"? Do you not see the great unselfish glory of God in Christ Jesus? When did He ever live unto Himself? What single act of His had a selfish purpose? What word ever sought His own honor? In what deed did He consult His own aggrandizement? Neither in life nor in death did Christ live within Himself—He lived for His people and died for them. See the glory of God in this!

There are two things I have noticed in the glory of God whenever my soul has been saturated with it and these I have seen in Jesus. I have sat upon a lofty hill and looked abroad upon the landscape and seen hill and dale and woods and field, and I have felt as if God had gone forth and spread His presence over all. I have felt *the outflow of Deity*. There was not a pleasant tree, nor a silvery stream, nor a cornfield ripening for the harvest, nor mountain shaggy with pines, nor heath purple with heather, but seemed aglow with God. Even as the sun pours himself over all things, so does God—and in the hum of an insect, as well as in the crash of a thunderbolt, we hear a voice saying, "God is here." God has gone forth out of Himself into the creation and filled all things. Is not this the feeling of the heart in the presence of Christ? When we come near Him, He is the all-pervading Spirit. In any of the scenes in which Jesus appears, He is omnipresent. Who but He is at Bethlehem, or at Nazareth, or at Jerusalem? Who but He is in the world? Is not He to us the everybody, the one only person of His age? I cannot think of Caesar or Rome, or all the myriads that dwell on the face of the earth as being anything more than small figures in the background of the picture when Jesus is before me. He is to my mind most clearly the fullness, filling all in all—all the accessories of any scene in which He appears are submerged in the flood of glory which flows from His all-subduing presence. Truly the outgoing glory of God was in Christ.

But you must have had another thought when you have felt the glory of God in nature—you must have felt *the indrawing of all things towards God*. You have felt created things rising unto God as steps to His throne. As you have gazed with rapture on the landscape, every tree and hill has seemed to drift towards God, to tend towards Him, to return, in fact, to Him from whom it came. Is it not just so in the life of Christ? He seems to be drawing all things to Himself, gathering together all things in one in His own personality. Some of these things will not move, but yet His attraction has fallen on them, while others fly with alacrity to Him, according to His word, "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." Thus those observations of the glory of God, which have been suggested to us by nature, are also abundantly verified in Christ and we are sure that the glory is the same.

I cannot express my own thoughts to you so clearly and vividly as I would, but this I know, if you ever get a vision of the glory of God in nature and if you then turn your thoughts toward the Lord's Christ, you will see that the same God is in Him as in the visible universe and that the same glory shines in Him, only more clearly. There is one God and that one God is gloriously manifested in Christ Jesus. "No man has seen

God at any time; the Only-Begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."

Let us now treat this thought of the glory of God in the person of Christ by way of experience. Have you ever heard Christ's doctrine in your soul? If so, you have felt it to be divine, for your heart has perceived its moral and spiritual glory and you have concluded that God is in it of a truth. Has your heart heard the voice of Christ speaking peace and pardon through the blood? If so, you have known Him to be Lord of all. Did you ever see the fullness of His atonement? Then you have felt that God Himself was there reconciling the world unto Himself. You have understood the union of the two titles, "God, our Savior." Beloved, you have often felt your Lord's presence and you have been admitted into intimate communion with Him. Then I know that a profound awe has crept over you which has made you fall at His feet and in the lowliest reverence of your spirit you have owned Him to be Lord and God. But when He has bent over you in love and said, "Fear not," when He has opened His heart to you and shown you how dear you are to Him, then the rapture you have felt has been so divine that you have, beyond all question, known Him to be God. There are times when the elevating influence of the presence of Christ has put His Godhead beyond the possibility of question—when we have felt that all the truth we ever heard before had no effect upon us compared with the truth that is in Him—that all the spirits in the world were ineffectual to stir us till His Spirit came into contact with our spirit. In this manner His omnipotent, all-subduing, elevating love has proved Him to be none other than "very God of very God." Thus have we spoken of the supremely precious object of Christian knowledge.

II. Secondly, let us spend a few words in noticing THE NATURE OF THIS KNOWLEDGE. How, and in what respects do we know the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? Briefly, first, we know it *by faith*. Upon the testimony of the infallible Word we believe and are sure that God is in Christ Jesus. The Lord has spoken and said, "This is My beloved Son, hear you Him." We accept as a settled fact the Godhead of the Lord Jesus and our soul never permits a question upon it. "We know that the Son of God is come and has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

Knowing our Lord's divinity by faith, we next have used our perceptive faculty and *by consideration and meditation, we perceive* that His life furnishes abundant evidence that He was God, for God's glory shines in that life. The more carefully we pay attention to the details given us by the four evangelists, the more is our understanding persuaded that no mere man stands before us. If, my brethren, your spiritual nature was set this task to try and describe how God would act if He were here, what God would be if He became incarnate and dwelt among men—I am sure you would not have been able to imagine the life of Christ. But if someone had brought to you the description given by the evangelists, you would have said, "My task is done. This is indeed a noble conception of God manifest in the flesh." I do not say that the wise men of this world would suppose God to have thus behaved, for their suppositions are sure

to be the reverse of the simple, unaffected, open-hearted conduct of Jesus. But this I do say, that the pure in heart will at once see that the acts of Christ are like the doings of God. He has done exactly what a pure intelligence might suppose God would have done. The more we have studied the more we have seen the glory of God in Christ.

And now we have come further than this, for we feel an inward consciousness that the Deity is in Christ Jesus. It is not merely that we have believed it and that we somewhat perceive it by observation, but we have come into contact with Christ and have known therefore that He is God. We love Him and we also love God, and we perceive that these two are one and the more we love truth and holiness and love, which are great traits in the character of God, the more we see of these in Christ Jesus. It is by the heart that we know God and Christ—and as our affections are purified, we become sensible of God's presence in Christ. Oftentimes when our soul is in rapt fellowship with Jesus, we laugh to scorn the very thought that our Beloved can be less than divine.

Moreover, there is one other thing that has happened to us while we have been looking at our Lord. Blessed be His name, we begin to grow like Him. Our beholding Him has purified the eye, which has gazed on His purity. His brightness has helped our eyesight so that we see much already and shall yet see more. The light of the sun blinds us, but the light of Jesus Christ strengthens the eye. We expect that as we grow in grace we shall behold more and more of God's glory, but we shall see it best in the Well-Beloved, even in Christ Jesus our Lord. What a sight of God we shall enjoy in heaven! We are heading that way and as we get nearer and nearer, our sight and vision of the glory of God in Christ is every day increased. We know it, then. We know it. We believe it. We are conscious of it. We are affected by it. We are transformed by it and thus at this day we have "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

III. Thirdly, let us gratefully review THE MEANS OF THIS KNOWLEDGE. How have we come at it? That brings us to read the text again, "For 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." Why did not everybody see the glory of God in Jesus Christ when He was here? It was conspicuous enough. Answer—it matters not how brightly the sun shines among blind men. Now, the human heart is blind—it refuses to see God in creation except after a dim fashion, but it utterly refuses to discern God in Christ, and therefore He is the despised and rejected of men. Moreover, there is a god of this world, the prince of darkness, and since he hates the light, he deepens and confirms the natural darkness of the human mind, lest the light should reach the heart. He blinds men's minds with error and falsehood and foul imaginations, blocking up the windows of the soul either with unclean desires or with dense ignorance or with pride. The reason why we did not at one time perceive the glory of God in Christ was because we were blind by nature and were darkened by the evil one. As only the pure in heart can see God, we, being impure in heart, could not see God in Christ. What, then, has happened to us? To eternal grace be endless

praise, God Himself has shined into our hearts—that same God who said, "Light be," and light was, has shined into our hearts. You know creation's story, how all things lay in black darkness. God might have gone on to make a world in darkness if he had pleased, but if he had done so, it would have been to us as though it had never been, for we could not have perceived it. Therefore, He early said, "Let there be light." Now, God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ might have been all there and we should never have discerned it, and as far as we are concerned it would have been as though it had never been if the Lord had not entered into us and the thick darkness and said, "Let there be light." Then burst in the everlasting morning, the light shined in the darkness and the darkness fled before it. Do you recollect the incoming of that illumination? If you do, then I know the first sight you saw by the new light was the glory of God in Jesus Christ. In fact, that light had come on purpose that you might see it and at this present moment that is the main delight of your soul, the choice subject of your thoughts. In the light of God, you have seen the light of the glory of God, as it is written, "In Your light we shall see light."

One thing I want to say to comfort all who believe. Beloved, do you see the glory of God in Christ Jesus? Then let that sight be an evidence to you of your salvation. When our Lord asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Now, note the reply of the Lord Jesus to that confession, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in heaven." If you can delight in God in Christ Jesus, then remember, "No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Spirit," and you have said it, and this morning you are saying it, and therefore the Holy Spirit has come upon you. "Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." You believe this and therefore you are born of the Father. "Whosoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father: but he that acknowledges the Son has the Father also." You love God and you are His—the Spirit of God has opened your eyes and you are saved.

While I have been preaching this morning, a number of my hearers have been saying, "We care nothing about Jesus Christ. His name is a most respectable one in our religion. We call ourselves Christians, but as to seeing the glory of God in Him when He was a babe and when He was despised and rejected of men, we know nothing of it. No doubt He is exalted now in heaven and we worship Him, though we hardly know why. But we see no special glory in Him." Others of you have been saying, "Yes, God was in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto Himself and He has reconciled me to Himself. I never loved God till I saw Him in Christ. I could never have any familiarity with God till I saw His familiarity with me in the person of His Son. I never understood how I could be God's son till I understood how God's Son became a man. I never saw how I could be a partaker of the divine nature till I saw how His Son became a partaker of the human nature and took me up unto Himself that He might take me up unto His Father." Oh, beloved, do you delight in Jesus Christ? Is He all your salvation and all your desire? Do you adore Him?

Do you consecrate yourself to His honor? Do you wish to live for Him and to die for Him? Then be sure that you belong to Him, for it is the mark of the children of God that they love God in Christ Jesus.

IV. So I finish by mentioning, in the fourth place, THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THIS KNOWLEDGE. There have been considerable debates among the interpreters as to the precise meaning of this text and some of them think it means that Paul is giving a reason why he preached the gospel. This makes the verse run thus, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, that we might give out again the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." God gave light to the apostles that they might show forth the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ to the nations. I do not know whether this is the exact run of the text, but I know it is true anyhow. Never is a gleam of light given to any man to hide away and to spiritual men, the great object of their lives, after they have received light, is to reflect that light in all its purity. You must not hoard up the light within yourself—it will not be light to you if you do. Only think of a person when his room is full of sunlight saying to his servant, "Quick, now! Close the shutters and let us keep this precious light to ourselves." Your room will be in the dark, my friend. So, when a child of God gets the light from Christ's face, he must not say, "I shall keep this to myself," for that very desire would shut it out. No, let the light shine through you. Let it shine everywhere. You have the light that you may reflect it. An object which absorbs light is dark and we call it black. But hang up a reflector in its place when the sun is shining and it will not appear black—it will be so bright that you will hardly bear to look at it. An object is itself bright in proportion as it sends back the light which it receives. So you shall find, as a Christian, that if you absorb light into yourself, you will be black, but if you scatter it abroad, you shall be brilliant—you shall be changed into the very image of the light which you have received—you shall become a second sun. I noticed last Sabbath evening, when I came into this pulpit, that, at the angle of the building before me, on the left hand the sun seemed to be setting, and I saw the brightness of his round face and yet I knew it to be the wrong quarter of the heavens for the sun to be setting there. Perhaps you will observe that there is a peculiar window on the other side of the street and it was reflecting the sun so well that I thought it was the sun himself and I could hardly bear the light. It was not the sun, it was only a window, and yet the radiance was dazzling. And so a man of God, when he receives the light of Christ, can become so perfect a reflector that to common eyes, at any rate, he is brightness itself. He has become transformed from glory to glory as by the image of the Lord.

Brethren and sisters, if you have learned the truth, manifest it and make it plain to others. Proclaim *the gospel*, not your own thoughts, for it is Christ that you are to make manifest. Teach not your own judgments and conclusions and opinions, but the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Let Jesus manifest Himself in His own light. Do not cast a light on Him or attempt to show the sun with a candle. Do not aim at converting men to your views, but let the light shine for itself and work its own

way. Do not color it by being like a painted window to it, but let the clear white light shine through you that others may behold your Lord.

Scatter your light in all unselfishness. Wish to shine, not that others may say, "How bright he is," but that they getting the light may rejoice in the source from which it came to you and to them. Be willing to make every sacrifice to spread this light which you have received. Consecrate your entire being to the making known among the sons of men the glory of Christ. Oh, I wish we had swift messengers to run the world over to tell the story that God has come down among us. I wish we had fluent tongues to tell in every language the story that, coming down among us, God was arrayed in flesh like our own and that He took our sins and carried our sorrows. Oh, that we had trumpet tongues to make the message peal through heaven and earth that God has come among men and cries, "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest". Oh for a voice of thunder to speak it or a lightning pen to write it across the heavens—that God has reconciled the world unto Himself by the death of His Son, not imputing their trespasses unto them and that whosoever believes in Christ Jesus has everlasting life. I cannot command thunder or lightning, but here are your tongues, go and tell it this afternoon. Here is my tongue and I have tried to tell it, and may it be silent in the dust of death before it ceases to declare that one blessed message—that God in Christ Jesus receives the sons of men in boundless love. Tell it, brother, with broken accents, if you cannot speak it more powerfully. Whisper it, sister, gently whisper, if to none other yet to your little children and make the name of "Emmanuel, God with us," to be sweet in your infant's ears. You are growing in strength and talent, young man—come, consecrate yourself to this. And you, grey-beard, before you lie down on your last bed to breathe out your spirit, tell the love of Jesus to your sons that they may tell it to their sons and hand it down to coming generations, that mankind may never forget that 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." God bless you. Amen.

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A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 14, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."
1 Corinthians 3:11.

UPBUILDING is very important, but the first question must always concern the foundation. However quickly, however cleverly a man may build, if the foundation is unsound, he is a foolish builder. And however slowly, however laboriously a man may proceed, his building will not put him to shame if he has set his walls erect upon a firm basis. This is emphatically true in spiritual things, for there the foundation is of the utmost importance. The hearer of the Word who is not a doer also comes to a fatal end because, as the Savior says, he has built upon sand and therefore his fabric in the day of storm and flood is swept away, while he who hears the Word and does it is secure because he digs deep and lays his foundation upon a rock and therefore his building survives the rains of trial from above, the floods of persecution from without, and the mysterious winds of Satanic temptation which howl from every quarter. The best masonry must crack and fall if the groundwork is unstable—the higher the pinnacle, the speedier its fall if the base is insecure.

As to what the foundation is in the religion of Jesus Christ, there is no question. This verse declares it to be decided beyond controversy. A man may build the superstructure in some measure according to his own taste and judgment, but it must be based upon the one foundation. There may be room for varieties of style in the upper building, but there can be no variety in the groundwork. That is fixed forever by the unchanging God, who says, "Behold, *I lay* in Zion a foundation stone." It must be acknowledged that all Christian minds and lives do not take exactly the same form and fashion—there are among the best of Christian builders certain grades of excellencies—one man builds with gold, another with silver, and a third with precious stones. But as to the foundation, all are on a level, Christ is all and in all. Whether the gracious life is rich as a golden palace or pure as a temple of silver or substantial as a tower of marble, whether it is public or obscure, wide or narrow, it must in every case be built upon the same basement of eternal rock, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid." You may say, "We will agree to differ" about matters which concern the superstructure, but we must agree to agree as to the foundation, for if we are not at one with the plain statement of the text, we are in the wrong.

The apostle is dogmatic to the very last degree, "No other foundation can anyone lay." "But," says one, "various teachers did lay other founda-

tions." The apostle will not admit that they were foundations—they were not worthy of the name—the imposture was too shallow to succeed. No builder, if he looked upon a heap of sand poured into an excavation, would admit that it was a foundation. If he saw a mass of decayed vegetation and garden rubbish heaped together, no architect would for one moment allow it to be spoken of as foundation. Paul declares that there is but one foundation and that there is none beside it or beyond it—and that the one only, unalterable, immovable, everlasting foundation is Jesus Christ. It is not to be imagined that there are other foundations somewhat differing and only a little inferior to the Lord Jesus—there is no other and no other can be laid. It is not a question of comparison, but of monopoly. All other groundworks and principles, whatever may be said in their praise, are mere falsehoods if they are set forth as foundations, for the Lord Jesus has exclusive possession of that title and in Him alone all that is fundamental is summed up, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

And truly, when you think that God from all eternity has made His only-begotten Son to be the foundation and cornerstone, it will be seen that this rock goes deep into the very nature of things, ay, deep as infinity itself and therefore there cannot be two of the kind, for of whom else is it written that verily He was foreordained before the foundation of the world? Of whom else is it said, "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning or ever the earth was"? When you think that this foundation is nothing less than divine, for Christ is very God of very God, it is as impossible that there should be two foundations as that there should be two Gods. You must imagine two redemptions before you can conceive of two groundworks for our confidence. Who will dream of two atonements, two Saviors, two Christs? Yet must such a thing be before there can be two foundations. None but Jesus, the divine Savior, could sustain the weight of a single soul with all its sins, much less of all the souls, which are built up into the temple of God. Jesus alone can sustain our eternal interest, deliver us from eternal wrath or lift us into eternal bliss. "There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus." His own words in prophecy are very positive, "I, even I, am the Lord, and beside Me there is no Savior," and equally expressive is His personal declaration, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by Me."

I will sketch out my discourse with these four lines which I may not always be able to keep from intersecting each other, but they shall each be marked deeply and broadly so that none can help seeing them. First, *there is no church but what is built on Christ.* Secondly, there is *no gospel but what is built on Christ*. Thirdly, there is *no hope of salvation but what is built on Christ.* And fourthly*, there is no Christian but what is built on Christ*.

I. First, there is NO CHURCH BUT WHAT IS BUILT ON CHRIST, I mean, of course, no true, no real church. There are many churches in the world, so called, but this may be laid down as a first principle that

there is but one church and that this one church is built upon Christ alone. Whatever community, congregation, hierarchy, sect, or corporation may call itself a church, or even the church, if it is not built upon Christ, is not a church at all. No matter how great in numbers, nor how ancient, nor how wealthy, nor how learned, nor how pretentious, bigoted, dominant, or exclusive it may be—it is not Christ's church if it is not built upon Christ.

To begin with, a *foundation is the first portion* of a building and so is the Lord Jesus first and foremost with His church, for His people were chosen in Him. God has always had in His purpose and decrees a chosen people, but He has had no such people apart from Christ. The apostle says, "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." We were chosen in Christ Jesus. He is "the first born among many brethren" and the Lord has "predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son." The first setting apart of the church and making it to be the peculiar inheritance of God was in connection with Christ—

"'Christ is My first elect,' He said,
Then chose our souls in Christ our Head."

We were never otherwise chosen, nor otherwise beloved, nor otherwise appointed to eternal life than as regarded in Christ Jesus and one with Him. No single soul can be said to be elect otherwise than as it is considered in connection with Christ. Much less then is there a church of God apart from the eternal purpose concerning Christ Jesus, the covenant head and federal representative of His people. The foundation must be laid first and so was our Lord Jesus Christ first appointed. "Therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation." Jesus is called by the Father, "My elect in whom My soul delights," and there are none elect except such as are in Him in the eternal purpose of grace.

But next, *a foundation is the support of all* and there is no church but that which derives all its support from Christ Jesus. If there is any company of people calling themselves a church who depend for salvation and eternal life upon anything besides or beyond the merit of Christ's atoning blood, they are not a church. That all things are of God and that He has reconciled us unto Himself by Christ Jesus is a truth never to be doubted. The atoning Savior is the cornerstone of the church. He is the one rock of our salvation, the one pillar of our strength. As living stones, we are built up into a spiritual house, but we one and all rest and depend upon Him and upon no other. To us the Word of the Lord has come with power, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ." The great atoning sacrifice of Christ must be the sole reliance of the whole church as well as of each individual and this must be set forth with great clearness and distinction as its first and greatest doctrine of salvation by Christ Jesus, in whom we have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace. The atonement taken away, no church remains. Call the community a reli-

gious club if you like, but it is no church when once the atonement made by the Lord Jesus, through His death in the room and stead of His people, is denied or ignored.

Nor do we judge a community to be worthy of the name of a church which places its dependence for its present power and future progress anywhere but in the almighty Savior. Jesus says, "Because I live you shall live also," and the church must draw its daily life from the immortality of her glorious Head. He that loved us and died for us and rose again is pledged to keep His own and on that pledge let them repose their faith. Because all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth, therefore we go forth to teach the nations. He has said, "Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," therefore have we strength to go forth for the conquest of the world. But if we depend upon an arm of flesh, upon the secular power, upon carnal wisdom, upon education or eloquence or prestige or upon our own zeal and ardor, and not upon Christ, we are leaving the rock for sand. We cannot thus build up Christ's church, nor ought we to attempt it. The strength of a living church is the living Christ. We must be very careful on this point, that when we are zealous in building, we build only upon Christ and by Christ, for edifices otherwise erected will fall in heaps. We must as a church not only rely upon the Christ that died, but upon the Christ who is gone into glory and sits at the right hand of God, ruling and reigning on our behalf, who also shall shortly come to gather together the scattered and to reign among His own. The true church, like a vine, derives its life sap of its branches from Jesus, the stem, and from no other source. She can say of her glorious Redeemer, "My soul, wait only upon the Lord, for my expectation is from Him." Other communities may lean on princes, but she comes up from the wilderness leaning on her Beloved. Other congregations may look to human greatness for support, but her eyes are towards the hills whence comes her help—her help comes from the Lord which made heaven and earth.

Furthermore, *a foundation has the shaping of the building* and the true Church shapes and forms itself upon the Lord Jesus as its ground plan and outline. The shape of a building must, to a very large extent, be determined by its foundation. If you have ever traced the foundations of an ancient abbey or castle, as they have appeared on a level with the soil, you have proceeded to infer the form of the building from the run of the ground line. Here was a sharp angle; there was a circular tower; there was a buttress and there was a recess. The building must have followed the ground line and so must every true church be built upon Christ in the sense of following His Word and ordinances to the best of its knowledge and understanding. The law of Christ is the law of the church. All the decrees of popes and councils, all the resolutions of assemblies, synods, presbyteries, and associations, and all the ordinances of men as individuals, however great they are, when they are all put together, if they at all differ from the law of Christ, they are mere wind and waste paper. Nay, worse—they are treasonable insults to the majesty of King Jesus. Those who build apart from the authority of Christ build off of the

foundation and their fabric will fall. There is no law and no authority in a true church but that of Christ Himself. We who are His ministers are His servants and the servants of the church, and not lords or lawmakers. To His law a faithful church brings all things as to the sure test. As churches we are not legislators, but subjects. It is not for us to frame constitutions, invent offices, and decree rites and ceremonies—but we are to take everything out of the mouth of Christ and to do what He bids us, as He bids us, and when He bids us. Parliaments and kings have no authority whatever in the church, but Christ alone rules therein. If any portion of a church is not based upon Christ, it is a mere deforming addition to the plan of the great Architect and mars the temple which God has built and not man. What a blessed thing it is to feel that you belong to a church which has the rock under it because it is constituted by Christ's authority. We feel safe in following an ordinance which is of His commanding, but we should tremble if we had only custom and human authority for it. How secure we feel in believing a doctrine which is of our Lord's teaching, for we can say, "This is not mere opinion; this is not the judgment of a wise man; this is not the decree of councils, but this is the Master's own declaration." Not one of His words shall ever fall to the ground. There is in His authority no change—forever is His Word settled in heaven and He is in Himself the same yesterday, today, and forever. Steadfast is that church which carefully follows His guiding line, but that which departs from His fixed rule and authority has left the foundation and therein ceased to be a church.

A *foundation is indispensable* to a building and so Christ is indispensable to a true church. In a house you could do without certain of the windows. You might close in a door and you might remove parts of the roof and still it might be a house, but you cannot have a house at all if you take away the foundation. And so you cannot have a church of Christ if Jesus Christ is not there as the foundation and cornerstone. When sermons are preached without so much as the mention of Christ's name, it takes more than charity—it requires you to tell a lie to say, "That was a Christian sermon." And if any people find their joy in a teaching which casts the Lord Jesus into the background, they are not His church or else such teaching would be an abomination to them. Yet I have heard it said that from some ministries you may go away like Mary Magdalene from the sepulcher, exclaiming, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him." One told me the other day that he had heard a discourse from a Christian pulpit which would have been applauded by Jews and Muslims, for there was not a trace of Christ in it. Another declared that in another place he heard priests, clergy, and sacraments so much puffed up that as for faith in the Lord Jesus it seemed to be a very small matter. Brethren, this is not so in the church of Christ. There the Lord Jesus is Alpha and Omega—first and last—beginning and end. True Christians make much of Christ. Indeed, they make all of Him. And as for priests and preachers they say, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man"? O brethren, let us see to this. If an-

ything is put into Christ's place we make it an antichrist and we are not Christians, but anti-Christians. The true church says, "Give us what learning and eloquence you will, but we cannot be content unless Christ is glorified. Preach us what you may, we will never be satisfied unless He who is the express image of the Father shall be set forth in our midst." Then, I say, she speaks like the true bride of Christ, but if she can be content to see her Lord dishonored, she is no chaste spouse of Christ.

Let us put this, our first point, in a few sentences. It is not the union of men with men that makes a church if Jesus Christ is not the center and the bond of the union. The best of men may come into bonds of amity and they may form a league or a federation for good and useful purposes, but they are not a church unless Jesus Christ is the basis upon which they rest. He must be the ground and foundation of the hope of each and of all.

Neither can a church be created by a mere union to a minister. It is most good and pleasant to see brethren dwelling together in unity—it is most advantageous that between the pastor and his flock there should be perfect love, but the relationship must not be exaggerated beyond due bounds. Brethren, there must be no glorying in men, nor blind following of them. A body formed of individuals whose religion lies in drinking in the theories and opinions of a religious teacher falls short of being a church of God. The church is not built on Paul, nor upon Apollos, nor upon Cephas, but upon the sole authority of Jesus Christ. We are not to be believers in Luther, Calvin, Wesley, or Whitefield, but in Christ. Of such believers a true church must be composed. Neither is a church made by the following of any particular form or rite. We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism—and we are bound to be loyal to Christ in His ordinances as in all else—but it is not the practice of an ordinance which constitutes a church. It is well to be united and bound together in loyalty to the faith once delivered to the saints, but unless there is vital, personal union with the person of Christ on the part of the members of the church, their association may constitute a league for the defense of orthodoxy or a confederation for the maintenance of a form of religious thought, but it is not a church. No, most blessed Lord, You must be there or nothing is there! Pastors, elders, deacons, teachers, evangelists—these are courses of precious stones in the heavenly temple, but without You they are no church, for the foundation is wanting. All Your saints come to You and rest on You, O Christ, and in You all the building, fitly framed together, grows unto a holy temple in the Lord. You, O Christ, are the seed-corn out of which the church grows, the stem from which it branches, the head in which it lives, the shepherd by whom it is fed, the captain by whom it is marshaled, the husband to whom it is married. You are, indeed, the all in all of the church which You have redeemed with Your own blood—

"God has a sure foundation given,
Fixed as the firm decrees of heaven.
The changeless everlasting rock,
That braves the storm and bides the shock.
There build the gates of hell in vain

Against that rock their war maintain.
Christ is the rock, the cornerstone,
God rears His beauteous house thereon."

Thus far, then, we have declared that there is no church except that which is built on Jesus Christ. This truth we assert in the face of all men—let them make what they will of it.

II. Secondly, we assert that there is NO GOSPEL BUT WHAT IS BUILT ON JESUS CHRIST. There are many pretended gospels in the world. Paul said once, "another gospel," and then he corrected himself and said, "which is not another," for strictly speaking there is only one gospel and there cannot be two. The good news, God's good news to men, is one. There never were two gospels, for there never were two Savior's or two redemptions and there never will be. But a Savior and a redemption are necessary to a gospel and therefore there can be only one. The foundation of the gospel is one, namely Jesus Christ, and there is no other possible foundation. For, first, *there is but one Mediator, by whom God speaks* words *of grace*. "There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus." If then, beloved, any man shall come to you and say, "God has spoken to me and bidden me to say to you somewhat other and above what Jesus has said," receive him not. If any man say unto you, "I have a revelation from heaven and God bids me speak," if he speak not according to the words of Christ Jesus, he is a false prophet and comes not from God at all. Yes, moreover, if bishop, or council, or church speak otherwise than Christ has spoken, the truth is not in any of them. All that ever spoke from God, both before Christ and after Christ, have spoken after their manner and measure in the same fashion as Christ Jesus, the Lord, for the voice of God is not two, but one, and the Word of God is not two or three, but one. And now at this day you may rest quite certain that if God has anything to say to us, He has in these last days spoken to us by His Son and His own hand has closed and sealed the revelation of God. Woe unto us if we hear Him not and woe unto us if we listen to other voices. Indeed, if we are the sheep of Christ, we shall not regard new voices, for our Lord has said it, "A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." The true gospel comes through Christ as the Mediator and through Him alone and that which comes otherwise is not the gospel.

The *true gospel has Christ's divine person as its glory* and there can be no gospel without this. Christ is God and in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. In the person of Christ, the divinity has come down to us to heal our diseases and remove our griefs. Now, if you hear of a gospel which begins by saying that Christ is not the Only-Begotten of the Father or that He is not the Son of God, close your ears to it, for it is not the gospel of God. Unless Jesus is extolled as God over all, blessed forever, the preaching is not the gospel.

Jesus Christ is the essence of the gospel—He is the good news, as well as the medium of it. The good news is that God has sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Eternal redemption has been obtained for us by the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and this is the gospel. There is pardon through His blood,

justification through His righteousness, and sanctification through His Spirit. Complete salvation is freely provided for believers in Him and the grace of God through Him is abundantly displayed to the very chief of sinners. God has made Him to be unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption—in fact, all the blessings that are needed to lift man up into the favor of God and keep him there forever, are stored up in the person of Jesus, in whom God's love has displayed itself to the fullest degree. Jesus is the sum and substance, crown and glory of the gospel. If then, you hear a gospel in which the freewill of man is spoken of as the main agent, in which the works of man or the forms and ceremonies practiced by priests are set up as being fundamental things, reject such teaching, for it is not the good news from heaven. The one good news is this, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Let others preach what they please, as for us, "We preach Christ crucified." Jesus Himself preached the very gospel of the gospel when He cried, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Now then, brethren, for I speak to many of you who teach the gospel, I beseech you to recollect my simple text of today and henceforth teach nothing apart from Christ. The teaching of doctrines is not the teaching of the gospel if those doctrines are held in a dry, didactic style apart from Christ. Suppose I preach the doctrine of election. That is one thing—but unless I preach that we are chosen in Christ, I have left out the foundation and my teaching crumbles to the ground—as a bowing wall shall it be and as a tottering fence. Suppose I preach final perseverance, it is well. But I have not preached the gospel unless I show that it is because Jesus lives, we shall also live and that the preservation of the saints depends on their union with Him. Suppose I am teaching justification—it is not the true justification unless it is the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus which I hold forth. Herein I commend to you the example of the earlier preachers of the church. From such of their writings as remain, we gather that they dwelt much upon the actual events of the Redeemer's life. They are not always so clear as one could wish upon the great doctrines as Paul gives them to us, but there is one point in which they excel. You may not hear enough from them about justification by faith, but you hear a great deal concerning the precious blood of Christ. They do not always speak so clearly upon regeneration as we would desire, but they speak much of the resurrection of Christ and of the newness of life which His saints enjoy in virtue thereof. Pardon to them is a washing in the blood of Christ. Conversion is being called by Christ. Resurrection is a risen Christ. Everything is brought out as a matter of fact arising from the actual life and death of the Savior and I am free to confess that I greatly admire this way of preaching the gospel. How does Paul put it? What was the gospel to him? Hear him, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein you stand; by which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures; and that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve." Thus, you see, Paul's body of divinity was the life and death of that only embodied divinity, the Lord Jesus. My brethren, always set forth the gospel in close connection with your Lord, fetching it, as it were, out of Him. The juice of the grape is pleasant, but if you would know what it is in all its purity keep the grapes near you and press them in the vineyard where they grow. So the gospel is the wine of Christ, but it is sweetest when it flows fresh from the cluster. Preach Jesus Christ when you preach His doctrine or else you may make the doctrine to be like the stone at the door of His sepulcher, whereas it ought to be like a throne of ivory on which, like another Solomon, your Lord sits resplendent.

Some preach experience and they do well, but they should be exceedingly careful to keep Jesus very prominent. We have a school of brethren who preach little else than experience and I do not condemn them. But what is the experience of a poor fellow sinner to me? How does it help me to hear that he groans as I do or sings as I do? It may be of some small service to me, but there are more excellent things. I need to know how Jesus felt and what Christ can do for my brother and for me. Experience is admirable when Jesus Christ is set forth in it, but if you take up an experiential vein of things, whether of human corruption or have human perfection, and Jesus Christ is put in the background, you are marring the gospel. Jesus is the one foundation and there is no gospel apart from Him.

So, too, with practice. By all means let us have practical preaching and plenty of it and let it come down sternly and faithfully on the vices of the times. But merely to preach against this and that vice and extol this and that virtue is a mission fit enough for Socrates or Plato, but does not well become a minister of Jesus Christ. Set Jesus forth, my practical brother. His example shames vice and encourages virtue. Set Him up as the mirror of all perfection and in Him men will see what they ought to be and learn how to come at it. Jesus Christ, then, is the only gospel. We leave that point, being abundantly sure that you are persuaded of it.

III. Thirdly. THERE IS NO HOPE OF SALVATION BUT THAT WHICH IS BUILT UPON CHRIST. This is another point upon which I need not speak much. I will only spend a few minutes in talking upon certain other hopes. No doubt some think it must be well with them because they were brought up from their childhood most respectably. Their parents were excellent Christian people and they believe that they themselves, having never done anything very wrong, are no doubt safe. Ah, my dear hearers, if this is your only hope, you are lost, for you are dead in sin. That which is born of the flesh, the best of flesh that ever was, is flesh and flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. You must be born again. You must have a far better hope than any which can spring out of your birth and your relations. "Yes, but," says another, "I had all the ceremonies of the church performed upon me." Yes, and it makes no difference to me what church it was. If you are building even upon rites which God has

given, they will not suffice you—they cannot bear the weight of your soul. Baptism, the Lord's Supper, or fifty thousand sacraments, if men were to make so many, would not help you one solitary inch. The only foundation for your soul's hope must be Christ and none of these outward things. "Ah," says another, "but I have diligently performed a great many good works." I would to God you had ten times as many good works, but if you have committed one single sin, no works can save you. All the good works of the best men that ever lived would make but a rotten foundation for them if they were to place reliance thereon. Abound in good works, but do not trust them. Human merit is a foundation of sand. "But I have had special spiritual feelings," says one. "I have been broken down, I have been lifted up." Yes, you may have been crushed down to hell's door and lifted up to heaven's gate, but there is nothing in feelings and excitements which can be a ground of hope. "Why," says one, "it has troubled me that I have not had these feelings." Do not let it trouble you, but go to Jesus Christ and rest in Him, feelings or no feelings. High frames and low frames are all delusions, if they are trusted in. We can no more be saved by our feelings than by our works. "Oh, but," says another, "I have confidence that I am saved, for I have had a wonderful dream and moreover, I heard a voice and saw a vision." Rubbish all! Dreams, visions, voices! Throw them all away. There is not the slightest reliance to be placed upon them. "What, not if I saw Christ?" No, certainly not, for vast multitudes saw Him in the days of His flesh and died and perished, after all. "But surely a dream will save me." It will give you a dreamy hope and when you awake in the next world your dream will be gone. The one thing to rest upon is the more sure Word of testimony—Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and whosoever believes in Him is not condemned. I believe in Him and therefore I am not condemned. Why do I believe my sin to be forgiven? Because Jesus died to put away the sins of believers and there is no condemnation to those who are in Him. Why do I believe myself to be justified? Because he that believes is justified—the Word of God says so. How do I know that I am saved? Because Jesus Christ has declared that whosoever believes in Him is not condemned. To believe in Him is to trust in Him, to make Him my foundation. I trust in Him. He is my foundation and I am saved or else His Word is not true. I know that His Word is true and therefore I am at rest. It is written, "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." I believe in Him, therefore I have everlasting life. I have His promise that I shall never perish, neither shall any pluck me out of His hand, therefore I shall never perish, neither shall any separate me from His love.

You see, then, there is no hope of salvation but what is fixed upon Christ alone and I do invite and entreat you, if any of you have any hope which goes beyond Christ or beside Christ, get rid of it. Throw it on a dunghill and loathe it as an insult to God. Do as the man did with the bad bank note. When he found it was a forgery, he buried it and ran away as fast as he could, for fear anybody should think the note had ever been in his possession. So, if you are trusting in anything that is not of Christ, bury your faith and run away from it, for it is a false confidence

and will work ill to your soul. Let your faith cry, "None but Christ." All-saving faith delights in that cry. For eternal salvation, "no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid."

IV. Our last point is this—THERE IS NO CHRISTIAN BUT THE MAN BUILT ON JESUS CHRIST. Here is a Christian and of one thing in him I am sure—I cannot tell whether he holds Arminian views or Calvinistic views, but if he is a Christian he has no foundation but Christ. Here is a person who reverences the Pope. Here is another who glories in the name of Protestant. Here is a third who is a Baptist—which is the Christian out of these? I answer, he is the Christian that is built on Christ, whoever he may be. But if he can do without Christ, he is not worthy of the name of Christian. What do we mean? Why this. I mean first, every man to be a Christian must *rest His whole soul upon Christ* as to eternal salvation. There must be no stuttering or stammering over that. There must be no mixing up the merits of Jesus with priests or ceremonies. No, it must be a clear, straight line—Christ for me. Christ everything for me—my one and only hope. Any deviation here is fatal. On the cross is written, *Spes unica* and it remains the one and only hope of a burdened soul.

Next, if you are to be a Christian, *Christ must be your model*. By the aid of His Holy Spirit, you must try to do what He would have done in your position and under your circumstances. You are not to say, "I cannot follow Christ in this." You are never to renounce His leadership. If you do, you must give up being a Christian because you are bound to take up His cross and follow Him. He claims to be your King when He becomes your Savior. A true Christian is a man who builds upon Christ, as his Model, as walls are built on a foundation. A true Christian is one whose growing up is in Christ, for, strange to say, the temple of God grows. Nor need we wonder, for it is a living temple. I have seen magnificent pieces of architecture, masterpieces, and it has struck me when I looked at them, that they must have grown. An ordinary, clumsy bit of work displays the mason and the carpenter, but perfect architecture looks as if it grew. And Christ's church does grow, for Christ's people grow. But all our up-growing must come out of Christ. When a man says, "Years ago I used to worship with these Christian people and I felt very happy with them, but I have now more education and have got beyond them," he is guided by his pride and not by grace. No true Christian talks so. The higher he grows, the more he grows into Christ. The wiser he is, the more he shows the wisdom of Christ. If he has begun aright, he may advance as far as he can, but he never can advance beyond Christ. He will get to be less and Christ will be more and more to him, for he is not a Christian who does not stick to this—that the foundation goes as far as he means to go and he builds never beyond that—but builds upward upon that and upon that alone.

And he, again, is the true Christian who *lives for Christ*, to whom Christ's glory is the great object of his being. He is a Christian who reckons that time wasted which is not used for Jesus—that substance wasted which is not used in obedience to Jesus—who considers that he does not live except as Christ lives in him.

Brothers and sisters, I pray that you may all be Christians of this sort, only let it be with you evermore Jesus Christ. I do not like to preach a sermon without feeling the presence of my Master. I have done so, but never to my own comfort. I cannot bear to come away from the Monday evening prayer meeting without feeling that the Lord has been there and He generally is. The true heart does not like to engage in any kind of enterprise without first consulting Him and doing it in His sight. We are a very busy church and I want you, as a busy church doing a great deal, always to keep the Master near you. The most holy work gets to be mere routine, to be done mechanically, unless we enjoy His dear love and sweet presence and blessed smile in the doing of His will. Sit at Jesus' feet with Mary as well as work for Him like Martha. May He be the foundation of everything, not only of the church, but of our hope, of our character, of every little thing we do. When you are laying the first stone of a new enterprise, lay it upon Christ with fair colors. Set it in the vermilion of His precious blood. Perfume it with the oil of gratitude and lay it upon Him alone. So shall you build for eternity and glorify His precious name. Amen.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He shall sit and rule on His throne; and He shall be a priest on His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." Zechariah 6:13.

LET us first look at the historical setting of this passage. It would seem that three Jews of the captivity had come from Babylon with a contribution towards the building of the temple at Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and Joshua. Their names are given in the tenth verse of the chapter before us. Now, the Jews at Jerusalem had become exceedingly exclusive and in some measure rightly so. They would not accept help for the building of the temple from Samaritans because they were a mixed race, but they had said to them, "You have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God, but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel." Possibly they had begun to feel some coolness with reference to the captivity at Babylon inasmuch as if any did not come back to their own land, their descent must be proven before they would be acknowledged. If they would not quit the ease and comfort of the towns in which they were settled and come up to Jerusalem to work with their brethren, could they be sure that they were really Israelites? At any rate, there would need to be some inquiry into their pedigree that they might not be receiving help from Samaritan pretenders. There was, however, no difficulty about the acceptance of the offerings in this case, for the prophet Zechariah was bidden to hasten down that same day and meet the three worthy Jews from Babylon. He was to accept for the Lord the tribute which they had brought and make of it crowns of silver and gold. He was then to go with these brethren and Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, their host, down to the temple, call for the high priest, Joshua, or Jesus, the son of Josedech, and place these coronets of silver and gold upon his head. This was to be done, not as an honor to the individual, but as a prophetic token that there would in due time arise one who would be a priest crowned with many crowns. This illustrious personage, who is called "the Branch," was to spring out of the decayed house of David, like a shoot from a tree which has been cut down even to the stump—according to the prophecy of Isaiah, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isa 11:1). He was to be both a priest and a king even as David had prophesied in the hundred tenth Psalm, "The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." Now Melchizedek combined the king and the priest in one person, as also does our Lord Jesus of whom Zechariah spoke. This royal priest was to build the real temple of God, which the temple at Jerusalem could never be, for the Highest dwells not in temples made with hands. It was also intimated

by the prophet that as at that particular time men had come from afar and had brought offerings to the temple, so in the days of this great priest-king many should come from the uttermost ends of the earth and should themselves be built into the temple of the Lord God. This is the historical setting of our text. Now we have to learn its spiritual lesson. May the Holy Spirit be our instructor.

Last Sabbath morning we spoke of the foundation of the temple of God. We saw how—

"The church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ, our Lord."

We may not forget that He who is the foundation is also the builder of the spiritual house, "He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory." There is but one who is the true architect and master-builder of the church of God, even Jesus Christ. His hands have laid the foundation of the house. His hands shall also finish it. So great is the fullness of our Lord Jesus that no figures can exhaust His character. He is not only foundation and builder, but He is the "headstone of the corner," the pinnacle as well as the basement, the Omega as well as the Alpha, the finisher as well as the beginner. He begins, He carries on, and He completes the divine structure of the church and when all this is done, it is He that establishes the structure, provisions, and furnishes it, keeps and preserves it, and best of all, it is He that is the glory in the midst, dwelling in the church, as a monarch in His own halls and making it to be a palace as well as a temple. It is the Lord Jesus who walks among the golden candlesticks of the church, who loads her table with bread and wine, and sends forth His rod of power from her midst. As a King as well as a Priest, He dwells in His palace-temple. As the Shekinah was the glory of the tabernacle of God among men in days of old, so is the presence of Jesus the glory of the church at this hour. "Lo, I am always with you; even unto the end of the world" is our pillar of cloud and of fire, our glory and our defense.

Our text tells us that the promised builder of the spiritual temple will inhabit and build it in His double character as priest and king. The church is built up by none other than by this Melchizedek and it is built by Him in virtue of both His offices as king and priest. As king He puts forth power and as priest He displays holiness. As a king He builds up the walls and as a priest He sanctifies them unto the Lord. At this moment it will be well for our faith to open her eyes and look up into heaven itself and see our great Priest-King sitting at the right hand of God exalted and yet at the same time working by His Spirit among men for the perfecting of His church below. Our Solomon is both reigning and building. Of His throne we may well say, "There was not the same in any kingdom," and of His temple we may also add that it is "exceedingly magnificent, of fame and glory throughout all countries."

I shall try, this morning, to set our Lord Jesus before you, as far as I can, in that double glory which is peculiar to Himself—in the majesty of His royalty and the holiness of His priesthood. Such lights meet not in any other star. To no one else belongs the royal priesthood, save only that He reflects His own brightness upon His brethren, whom He has made to be priests and kings.

The subject will run thus—first let us consider *the glorious combination of offices in the person of Christ.* Secondly, let us notice *the happy result* of it, "The counsel of peace shall be between them both." And then, thirdly, let us suggest *the action on our part which is harmonious thereto*—make crowns and set them upon the head of Jesus.

I. First, then, I want you to consider at this time THE GLORIOUS COMBINATION which is found in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Note, first that He is King and of Him, as King, it is written, "He shall sit and rule upon His throne." One has the idea of ease suggested by the expression. Few kings have been able to sit and rule, but they have been forced to rise and rush hither and thither to defend their sovereignty. No other seat in the world is so uneasy as a throne. We have seen monarchs elevated by their soldiers or borne aloft by the fickle throng—bayonets or ballot boxes have been the frail supports of their thrones. The last few centuries have been a sorry time for kings. As once men feared to be thought prophets, so might men in revolutionary times have cried out each one, "I am not a king nor the son of a king." But our Lord Jesus sits upon a throne which knows no trouble—once for all He has bled and died, but now He has gone into glory never to be disturbed again. The Lord who has set Him on the throne by an unalterable decree has His enemies in derision and Jesus waits in perfect rest until His foes shall be made His footstool. Publicly recognized as King of kings by the divine enthronement which His Father has given Him, He is not a king warring for a disputed crown, nor battling to drive invaders from His realm—He sits and rules upon His throne.

Sitting is the posture of abiding as well as resting. Jesus reigns on and will reign on so long as the moon endures. "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever." Even we, who are yet young, have seen dynasties come and go and we have seen the kingdoms of the earth moved and tossed to and fro as the waves of the sea, yet the throne of Jesus has not been shaken, for it is written, "The Lord sits upon the flood; yes, the Lord sits King forever." "The Lord is great in Zion, and He is high above all the people." "The Lord shall reign forever and ever." Hallelujah.

As a King, He is described as sitting *upon His own throne*. He has not usurped the throne of another, but His right to sovereignty is indisputable. He is well qualified to be King of men since He is their Redeemer. His Father has given Him a crown as the reward of the travail of His soul, even as He promised, "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death." He sits upon a throne which He has won by conquest, for He has vanquished the powers of darkness and led captivity captive. His right to His throne can never be disputed, for it is accorded to Him by the enthusiastic approval of all His people. Do we not sing—

"Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all"?

There is no monarch so secure as He. He is really and truly King by divine right. He is King by descent, for He is Son and heir of the Highest. He is King by His own intrinsic excellence, for there is none to be compared to Him. And he is King by His own native might and majesty, for

He Himself holds His throne against all comers and shall hold it till all enemies shall be under His feet. Thus is He spoken of as King.

A hint or two is given as to His position as priest, namely, that He is first, priest, before He is King, for so was the type in the text. Jesus, the son of Josedech, was already high priest and then he was crowned with the gold and silver crowns. Now, the kingdom of which we speak today is not that of Christ's essential royalty as by divine nature and therefore Lord of all, but that which His Father has given Him, because, "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Jesus reigns because He died. For the suffering of death, He is crowned with glory and honor. The saints in heaven sing, "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."

We note, too, with regard to our Lord's priesthood, that He is said to sit, for if He sits as king, it is implied that He sits as priest. Indeed, it is expressly said, "He shall be a priest upon His throne." Now, of no other priest is it said that he sits, for the apostle says, "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." There was no seat provided within the Holy Place for Aaron or for any of the priests—they were servants of God and they stood daily ministering. "But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified." Jesus still sits forevermore in quiet expectancy, for all His work is done—no merit to be worked out to complete His righteousness, no sufferings to be endured to perfect His atonement. "It is finished," He said, as He gave up the ghost—and it is finished and in token thereof, Jehovah says to Him, "Sit You at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool." So far, then, we have a glimpse of the King sitting on His throne and of the priest, crowned and resting from His labors.

Thus far, we have seen each office, now we are to see the two combined in the Lord Jesus and to make the combination clear we shall notice, first, that as a priest, He is royal. And then, secondly, that as a king, He is priestly. Consider, now, that as a priest, our Lord is royal.

He was a priest when He honored the law by His own death. He was a priest when He took upon Himself our sin and bore it, offering His own soul as the victim upon the altar of His body. He was to the full a priest when He presented His one sacrifice for sin, but never let it be forgotten that even then, in His nature, He was a king. The sword of vengeance awoke against the man who was Jehovah's fellow even when He bled. The laws which He vindicated had been ordained by Himself and it adds a special glory to His priestly work of atonement that it was worked by the royal lawgiver Himself. The subject broke the laws, but it was the King who bore the penalty. He that is under law offends, but He that

made the law came under the law that He might make amends to the injured honor of His own justice. This was a notable deed of love and of justice combined. Let us confide the more surely upon the sacrifice of our great High Priest, because of the dignity of His nature and the supremacy of His rank, even when He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a servant.

Our Lord stooped to the lowest service for our sakes when He was acting a priest among us in these lower realms. He presented Himself as an offering for sin and men scourged Him, spat upon Him, and hung Him up like a felon, and in all this shame and suffering, we look to Him as our Savior. Thus He made expiation for sin. But though we are to look to Him in that capacity for the pardon of sin, as men sought cleansing from a priest, we must never forget that now He expects homage from us and we must come to Him for government as men pay obedience to a king. Think of Him as the crucified One as much as you will, for as such He is your atoning sacrifice, but remember that this same Jesus which was crucified, God has proclaimed to be both Lord and King. Trust in the man of the thorn-crown must foster and nourish reverence for the Lord who wears many crowns. We must not only trust but worship. We must never separate from that shame and spitting the fact that the four living creatures and the elders prostrate themselves before the Lamb and sing unto His praise, "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."—

"Salvation to God, who sits on the throne,
Let all cry aloud, and honor the Son.
The praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,
Fall down on their faces and worship the Lamb."

O you that come to Him today laden with guilt and full of fears to wash yourselves in the fountain which He filled from His own veins, you must also come to obey Him and to walk in His statutes. You may not come to Him merely that you may get your sins forgiven, you must come to be cleansed from the power of evil and to yield yourselves unto God. Jesus was given that He might be a leader and a commander to the people, as well as their deliverer and Savior. A true disciple looks to His Master for ruling as well as for teaching and he expects to render obedience as well as to receive instruction. There may be no separation between these two points—our priest to save must always be regarded as our king to rule. He puts away sin, but He expects to reign over the forgiven spirit. He washes our feet, but He looks to see that we also practice His precepts and example of love, for He says, "You also ought to wash one another's feet."

At this moment in heaven, if your eyes of faith can see the Lord Jesus, you perceive that He is pleading for His people as a priest. It is a priest's duty to offer intercession for those over whom he is appointed and this Jesus does continually. Has He not said, "For Zion's sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest"? He always lives to make intercession for them that come to God by Him. But do not forget that our Lord does not make intercession otherwise than royally. There is no prostration now amidst the olives of the gloomy garden, no bloody sweat, no strong crying and tears. He says not, "Not as I will, but as You

will," but He urges His case in another fashion. The interceding priest has laid aside His bloodstained garments and put on His robes of holiness for glory and for beauty. Jeweled breastplate, ephod of gold and blue and purple and scarlet, miter and fine linen and gold, and girdle of needlework the High Priest wore on favored days—all typical of the glory of the Lord Jesus now that He has gone within the veil. With authority He pleads with God from the throne of His power. He asks and He has. He speaks and it is done, for the intercessor of the saints before the throne of God is now the King immortal, eternal, invisible, the only wise God, our Savior. Oh, what prevalence there is in His plea and when we give Him our cause to plead, how confident we may feel that the blessing will come to us.

As a priest our Redeemer not only pleads with God, but He blesses the people. It was the work of the high priest to pronounce the benediction over the house of Israel. Jesus does that, but He does it royally. I mean He does it with the power of a king as well as with the commission of a priest. He does not merely wish us good, but He works us good. There is omnipotent sovereignty at the back of the priestly benediction. He that speaks and declares His people to be justified, accepted, preserved, and blessed is He who can make good His words. The benediction of Jesus, the Priest, is the benediction of Jesus the King. Let us rejoice and be glad in this.

And now, beloved, it is as a priest that Jesus sends out His gospel to the ends of the earth. In that gospel He invites men to come to Him that He may purge them from their uncleanness. Today He speaks by us, His ministers, and bids men come to the great Priest that He may heal them of their leprosy and deliver them from all manner of defilement. But mark you, it is an invitation from a King as well as from a priest and he that rejects it shall be counted guilty of disloyalty and high treason. "He that believes not shall be damned." It is not, O sons of men, that Jesus offers you salvation and leaves it up to you whether you will have it or not, but if you reject it, your rejection will be required at your hands. Beware, you despisers, and wonder and perish. The invitation to the wedding of the great King is made freely, of His voluntary bounty, but if any who are bidden shall refuse to come, the King will be angry and send forth His armies against those who thus proclaim their enmity. Jesus is not only priest, asking you to come to Him and receive of His forgiving love, but He is a King as well, who will break with a rod of iron all that dare to trample on His blood and slight His priestly grace.

Thus I have put forward the combination in one form and testified that Jesus as a priest is right kingly in all that He does. Let us now turn the other side of the truth towards the light and see that as a *King He always retains His priestly character* and in the deeds of His sovereignty, He acts not otherwise than as the High Priest of His people.

The Lord Jesus Christ is king over all at this very moment. He reigns over the whole world and notwithstanding all this hurly-burly of affairs, this perpetual clamor of wars and rumors of wars, His kingdom rules over all. Our Lord is master of the game and He shall surely win at the end. "The government shall be upon His shoulders." But blessed be His name, our Lord's kingly majesty is ever softened and sweetened by His

priestly tenderness, else He would have crushed this world out of existence long ago. If rule had been all and mercy had not claimed her share, justice would have swept away this rebellious race. If Jesus were not priest as well as King, He would say to His angels, "Go and smite that nation which refuses My gospel. Destroy antichrist that lifts his triple crown against My sole sovereignty. Go and scourge that favored nation which, having the gospel of peace, yet chooses war and with high looks and lofty words provokes bloodshed." He does not destroy because His office is to forgive and save. A priest must show longsuffering, gentleness, and compassion, for to that end is he taken from among men and ordained for men in the things of God. Such is our Lord, "He is not slack concerning His promise, but He is longsuffering to us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." This longsuffering of the King leads to repentance—its intent is man's salvation. We, who are short of patience, cry eagerly to Him, "Come, O King. Come, O King." But He answers, "I tarry yet a while in mercy that still more may be gathered to My name and may wash themselves in My atoning blood." Think of this, my brethren. Do not lower Christ's sovereignty, but at the same time learn to see it shining with gentler beams through the medium of His priestly character.

And, now today among His servants, Jesus alone is King and as king He commands us. He lays certain laws upon His servants and He bids us teach all men to observe His statutes, but oh, it is so sweet to think that our King in Zion is also a faithful and merciful High Priest, touched with a feeling of our infirmities, ready to help us, and prompt to forgive us. My brethren, though Jesus commands you, yet He pities your weakness and helps you to obey. He has given you a law, but He knows your feebleness and so He gives you grace to keep it. Ay, and when you do not keep it, He has pity upon the ignorant and upon them that are out of the way—and your sins of ignorance and of transgression He continues still to put away. When His servants were about Him here on earth, He not only gave His commands to them, but He prayed for them that they might be kept from disobeying in the hour of trial and He restored them when they had fallen. He not only ruled His little band of followers, but He kept them in the name of the Lord. He was their king and their priest too. Read the commands of Jesus with becoming reverence, for He is your King. But let them not distress you, for He knows your weakness and will help you to do what of yourself you are incapable of doing. He is king, but the priestly garment is always over the kingly vesture—whatever the ornaments of His imperial splendor, He is still clothed with a garment down to the feet. The priesthood covers all and removes all cause of dread from every believing mind.

The same is true of our great King when He goes out to war. He is the Lord mighty in battle—in righteousness He does judge and make war. The psalmist cries, "Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O most mighty, with Your glory and Your majesty. And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Your right hand shall teach You terrible things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under You." But the wars of Christ are not like the wars of earthly monarchs. His sword is not in His

hand, but it goes out of His mouth and with this He smites and rules the nations. He is clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, but it is His own blood. Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood, but this is a warfare of another fashion, for He wrestles not with men, but with their sins. Not with princes and armies, but with falsehood and iniquity. His victories are not those of mighty men who return from the fray amidst the groans of widows and the cries of orphans, but His bloodless triumphs make glad the poor and the oppressed and only crush down principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places, bringing good to all who seek His face. He is a king, but always the patron and true priest of men.

Among ourselves at this day, beloved, we who know Him delight to own Him as our king. O Lord Jesus, You greater Joseph, the shepherd and stone of Israel, all our sheaves pay obedience unto Your sheaf and all Your father's children bow down before You. You more glorious Judah, You are He whom Your brethren shall praise. Unto You shall the gathering of the people be. The chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely are You. Yes, beloved, this glorious one is our brother and delights to be regarded as a priest taken from among men, being one of ourselves, able to sympathize with our infirmities. Our Lord is higher than the highest and yet He stoops as low as the lowest. He is kingly even to deity and yet so truly a priest that in all our afflictions He is afflicted. He is not ashamed to call us brethren. Ruler of our race, He is yet partaker of our flesh and blood and He is acquainted with all our sorrows. True king and yet true priest.

Thus I would have you blend the idea in both ways and see Jesus as a royal priest and a priestly king—

"Jesus, the King of glory, reigns
On Zion's heavenly hill.
Looks like a lamb that has been slain,
And wears His priesthood still."

Such is your Lord. May your view of Him be clear, your faith in Him be firm, your love to Him be fervent, your joy in Him be overflowing and your obedience to Him be constant. Trust the Priest and serve the King and ever pay your vows unto Him who is "a priest upon His throne."

II. Secondly and very briefly, we shall now meditate upon THE HAPPY RESULT of all this. The text says, "The counsel of peace shall be between them both." I confess myself unable dogmatically to interpret this passage, for there are no less than three possible meanings. I must give them all and leave you to judge for yourselves. The most natural reading, to my mind, is that when we shall see in the person of Christ the king and the priest combined, the counsel of peace shall be between them both. These offices, the king and the priest, being combined in one, shall make a deep and lasting peace for us—a peace arranged by the deep thought and counsel of God and therefore full of wisdom, truth, and certainty. When we see the lawgiver Himself making atonement for our transgressions, we have peace indeed. When ruler and Savior meet in one person, the rest is sure and profound. Beloved, if this is not the meaning of the passage, it is at least a precious truth. If we need peace, we can only obtain it by knowing Christ as priest and king. The counsel of peace must lie between these two. Oh, do you know Christ, my dear

hearers, as your priest? Have you seen Him offering sacrifice for your sin? Does He stand instead of you before God? Do you present your prayers and your praises to God through Him? Well, then, you have begun to know what peace is, for peace comes through the blood of Jesus the priest—peace by His righteousness, peace by His sacrifice. But if, knowing this, you are still in trouble of heart, remember that you need to know Him also as your king. When He subdues your iniquities, when the power of sin is taken away as well as the guilt of it, then you shall know the perfection of peace. "Take My yoke upon you," He says, "and learn of Me, and you shall find rest unto your souls." It is not in a mere belief in Christ as your Savior that you will ever get perfect peace, it is by yielding up yourself unto Him that He may rule and reign over you completely. This man shall be the peace when He is Lord as well as priest. As long as your will rebels against your Redeemer's rule, you cannot have unbroken rest. It is idle for you to talk about trusting in the blood of Jesus unless you submit to His scepter. The cross itself cannot save you if you divorce it from the crown. Your Savior must be a priest upon His throne to you. His blood must be on your conscience and His yoke must be upon your neck. There is no counsel of peace until it is between both these—the kingly priest, the priestly king alone can make and maintain the peace of God within you. That is a great and deep truth—may we learn it well.

But it is thought by some wise men that the text means the counsel of peace shall be between Jehovah the Father and the Son. I am not sure that such a meaning would suggest itself to every reader and as the most obvious meaning is generally to be preferred, I will not contend for this second meaning. However, as an interpretation, it is certainly not too far-fetched and even if it cannot be sustained, it is certainly a very great truth. It is between God, the Eternal Father, and Jesus Christ, our Melchizedek, or king-priest, that the counsel of peace has been established on our behalf. You never know God so as to have peace with Him till you know God in human flesh. Only the incarnate God can end the trouble of your spirit. Ay, and it must be that incarnate God bleeding, suffering, dying, making expiation for sin, and then rising to the throne and ruling over all that must be seen before you can perceive how the infinitely glorious Jehovah can be at peace with you. God in covenant is God at peace with man. There was a counsel between the Trinity at the making of man, "Let Us make man" and so also there was a counsel between the divine Persons at the redemption of man—the counsel of peace is between them both. It is a joy for us to know that between Jesus, our priest-king, and the everlasting God, peace has been established for us. Peace which never can be broken. Our first covenant head, Adam, broke the treaty and left us at war with God, but the second Adam has fulfilled and established the covenant of grace and believing in His name, we have peace with God.

But there is a third meaning and although I am not sure of it as the sense here, it is assuredly a blessed truth and appears to me to be congruous with the connection. Let me go back to the historical circumstances. Here were these three men that had come from Babylon. The prophet is to take them to the house of a Jew resident in Jerusalem. There might be some little differences between these men and the Jeru-

salem Jews. These Babylonian Jews had not come up to dwell in Jerusalem, but Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, was a resident there and he might have demurred and have said, "We cannot take your present to the temple because you do not bring yourselves and come to abide with your own people." No, but they were to go up, together, bearing the gold and silver crowns and put them upon the head of the priest. They were to go up in unity and love and they were to furnish in their own persons types of other far-off ones who should come to the great crowned priest whose coming the prophet had foretold. Thus said the prophet, "They that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord, and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me unto you." Now, certainly, it is in Jesus Christ, the Priest and King, that the Jews who were near and the Gentiles, who were afar off, are brought together and made one. In Him, the middle wall of partition is broken down and the counsel of peace is between us both. The day shall come when our glorious Lord shall be more clearly manifested than now, in the glory of His second advent and when the Jews shall behold Him as the priestly king and bow before Him. Then shall the fullness of the Gentiles also be gathered in and the Lord Jesus Christ shall reign over the whole earth. May that day speedily dawn! We have reason to expect it, therefore, let us pray for it and strive for its on-bringing. Jesus the Priest and King is the uniter of the divided nations. Jew and Gentile are, after all, of one blood and one God is the Father of all—why should they not become one? "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin," but one touch of Jesus Christ shall do it infinitely better—shall do it once and for all.

III. I close with the third point, which is this—THE ACTION WHICH IS HARMONIOUS WITH THESE TRUTHS. The connection of our text suggests to us to do exactly what the prophet Zechariah advised the Babylonian Jews and Josiah to do. I will read you what he said, "Take silver and gold and make crowns and set them upon the head of Joshua" or Jesus. This is what is to be done.

First, "take." "Take silver and gold." That is, bring the choicest things you have. If Jesus Christ is a priest, should you not bring your offerings to Him! If Jesus Christ is a king, should you not bring tribute to your king! If you have gold and silver, bring them, for to Him shall be given of the gold of Ophir. If you have talent, which is much more valuable than gold and silver, bring ability, tact, genius—bring all the acquisitions of learning, all the acquirements of experience, and all your natural talents and consecrate them all to Him. Whether you have these or not, bring your heart, which is more precious, by far. It is the very essence of your being—make this a crown for Jesus. Come, bring your soul, your life, your all. Has He redeemed you? Then be His forever. Is He your king? Do not mock Him with a half-hearted service—be loyal to such a sovereign and serve Him with spirit, soul, and body. Take silver and gold and bring them to Him. Bring your whole being to Him.

What next? "Take," then, *"make."* "Make crowns." Come, my brethren, I invite you to this occupation. You say, "We are neither goldsmiths nor silversmiths." Nevertheless, make crowns. Try your hands this morning and make crowns for Jesus with such material as you have. Fashion the crown of memory. Think of what He has done for you from the first day

until now. Interweave and intertwist the recollections of the past—hammer out the gold of gratitude—set in it the gems of love and make a coronet for His dear head. Make crowns by holy contemplation and thought. Think how great your Lord is and how great He deserves to be blessed, however-blessed. Then make crowns of purposes of what you hope to be and do. Plot and plan within your spirit something you have not yet done, which you are able to do before you go home to heaven. Look for some child you may teach, some sinner you may woo and win, some treasure you may spend for Jesus, some precious promise you may whisper in the ear of the distressed, some holy enterprise you may suggest to earnest youth. Make crowns!

It seems to me so sweet that it should be said, "Set them upon the head of Jesus." Brethren and sisters, let us crown Him ourselves. We hope to do so in heaven—let us do it here. Our love shall be the gold, our praise shall find the gems, our thanksgivings and our humble labors shall furnish the silver and then we will set the golden chaplets about His brow which once was torn with thorns for us. Coronets for Jesus! Coronets for Jesus! Crowns for our priestly King! Let us make and bring them.

I return to that blessed precept, "Set them upon the head of Jesus." Whenever we have made a crown, let us take care to put it on His head ourselves. Have you ever, when you have been doing something for Him or giving something to His cause, wished that you could present it to Him personally? Well, you may do so in spirit and that is as much a matter of fact as if you did it bodily. With your shoe off your foot, let your spirit draw near to Jesus and in thought offer to Him the deed which you have worked. Speak to Him and tell Him that this is done for Him alone. I do not know a greater pleasure upon earth than to think of something you can do for Jesus and then to do it for Him and to tell Him so. "Jesus, I did it all for You. I thought not of my brethren's praise, nor do I think of it now, but I did this deed for You alone. Here is the best crown I can make and by I put it on Your head." The love of Jesus will suggest and produce many a deed which else had never been done. If you have a beautiful alabaster box, it is not pleasant to break it and if you have choice ointment, it is not according to nature to pour it out upon another. No, but when you are before His feet, the feet of Jesus your Lord, then is it a delight to break the alabaster box and to pour out its fragrant contents for Him. The utmost waste is economy when it is done for Him and to sacrifice strength, soul, health, life is to save it all when it is spent for Him. Where should it go? Where should my all go? For what should my bodily frame be consumed? Where should my soul be poured out but for His honor? Do you not feel it so? You will, if you distinctly recognize that He is king and priest. You will bring crowns and put them on His head, if you know who and what He is.

And what is said last? It is said that this should be a memorial to those three men and to the brother who had entertained them. I suppose these crowns of silver and gold were hung up in the temple and when anybody said, "What are those crowns yonder?" it would be answered, "Those are crowns which were made by order of the prophet Zechariah, by Heldai and Tobijah and Jedaiah, who came from Babylon. And they

are in memorial of those men and in memorial of the hospitality of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, who entertained them at his house when they came. They are hung up in the temple in honor of the coming priestly king and in memorial of those four men who presented an offering to the Lord." It seems very amazing that God should allow in His house memorials of His servants, but He does so. And our great priestly King allows memorials of His people in His temple now. We shall never forget, shall we, while the world stands, the sacrifice of Paul and how he made crowns and set them on the head of Jesus? Never while the earth lasts shall we forget the sacrifice of John and Peter and James. Nay, the church will not forget the sacrifices of Luther and Calvin and Zwingli and Wycliffe, and the holy lives and ardent ministries of Whitefield and Wesley shall not be forgotten in the church, because they made crowns and set them on the head of Jesus. "Oh," say you, "but we must not remember men." "Nay," say I, "but we may remember men." "Nay," say I, "but we may remember men and women, too, for our Lord has set us the example." "Wheresoever this gospel is preached there shall this which this woman has done be mentioned for a memorial of her." My Master thinks much of His people and in the plenitude of His great goodness the little things which they do for Him are held in remembrance. Did he not say of Cornelius, "Your prayers and your alms have come up as a memorial of you"? This is sweet to think upon. While our King-priest shall have the crowns and wear them, yet we, if we bring love tokens and honorable spoils to Him, shall be remembered, too, in that day when He shall award the praise to His people, saying, "Well done, good and faithful servants." The Lord whom we serve will immortalize our service by uniting it with His service. We shall rest from our labors, but our works shall follow us. The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance. They shall shine forth as the sun when their Lord's glory shall be revealed. Their priest shall make them priests. Their king shall make them kings and they shall forever be filled with the vision of the priest upon His throne. So may it be with us. Amen.

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AMONG LIONS
NO. 1496

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 4, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"My soul is among lions."
Psalm 57:4.

SOME of you cannot say this and you ought to be very thankful that you are not obliged to do so. Happy are you young people who have godly parents and who dwell in Christian families. You ought to grow like the flowers in a conservatory, where killing frosts and biting blasts are unknown. You live under very favorable circumstances. Your soul, I might almost say, is among angels, for you dwell where God is worshipped, where family prayer is not forgotten, where you can have a kindly guidance in the hour of difficulty and comfort in the time of trial. You dwell where angels come and go and God Himself deigns to dwell. Happy young people to be in such circumstances! How grateful and how holy you ought to be! I want all who dwell where everything helps them, to recollect the many gracious ones who dwell where everything hinders them. You who live near the Beautiful Gate of the temple must not forget the many who are sighing in the tents of Kedar. If your soul is not among lions, praise God for it and then let your sympathies go out towards those who mournfully complain—

"My soul with him that hates peace
Has long a dweller been.
I am for peace, but when I speak,
For battle they are keen."

It is a Christian duty to "remember them that are in bonds as bound with them." And whenever our own favored circumstances lead us to forget those who are persecuted and tried, our very mercies are working mischief in us. "We are all members one of another." If one member suffers, all the rest should suffer with him and therefore we will turn our thoughts towards our persecuted brethren tonight, that our united supplications may sustain them under their difficulties and if the Lord is so pleased, may even deliver them.

When may a Christian man truly say, "My soul is among lions"? Such is the case when, either from our being members of ungodly families or from having to gain our livelihood among unconverted and graceless people, we are subjected to reproach and rebuke and to jest and jeer for Jesus Christ's sake. Then we can say, "My soul is among lions." Many in this congregation known to me are the only ones in their family whom God has called. I bless His name that He is often taking one of a household and a lone one of a family and bringing such to Jesus. Some quite un-Christian person who thinks not of God drops in here out of curiosity

and God meets with him and he becomes the first of his kith and kin to say "I am the Lord's."

Frequently when converts come to cast in their lot with us, they will say, "I do not know one in all my family who makes any profession of godliness. They are all of them opposed to me." In such a case, the soul is among lions and it is very hard and trying to be in such a position. Well may we pity a godly wife bound to an ungodly husband. Alas! full often a drunkard, whose opposition amounts to brutality.

A tender, loving spirit that ought to have been cherished like a tender flower is bruised and trod under foot and made to suffer till her heart cries out in grief, "My soul is among lions." We little know what life-long martyrdom's many pious women endure. Children also have to bear the same when they are singled out by divine grace from depraved and wicked families. Only the other day there came under my notice one who loves the Lord. I thought that if she had been a daughter of mine I should have rejoiced beyond all things in her sweet and gentle piety, but her parents said, "You must leave our house if you attend such-and-such a place of worship. We do not believe in these things and we cannot have you about us if you do." I saw the grief which that state of things was causing and though I could not alter it, I mourned over it. Woe unto those who tyrannize over my Lord's little ones.

Nobody knows what godly working men have to put up with from those among whom they labor. There are some shops where there is religious liberty, but frequently the working men of this city are great tyrants in matters of religion. I tell them that to their faces. If a man will drink with them and swear with them, they will make him their companion, but when a man comes out to fear God, they make it very hard for him. And pray, dear sir, has not a man as much right to pray as you have to swear? And has he not as much right to believe in God as you have to disbelieve? It is a wonderfully free country, this wonderfully free country! Almost as free as America in the olden time when every man was free to beat his own slave, for now the working man claims freedom to laugh and swear at every other working man who chooses to be sober and religious. There are large factories all over London where a Christian man has to run the gauntlet of sneers from morning to night, which never ought to come upon the face of honest men and which never would come if Britons were as fond of freedom as they profess to be. They declare that they never will be slaves, but they are slaves—slaves to their own ungodliness and drunkenness—the great mass of them. And only where divine grace comes in and snaps the chain do men become free at all. If one serious man sets his face steadfastly to serve God, the baser sort seem as if they must get him under their feet and treat him with every indignity that malice can devise. It may be all in sport, but the victim does not think so. Do not tell me that persecution ceased when the last martyr burned. There are martyrs who have to burn by the slow fire of cruel mockings day after day, and I bless God that the old grit is still among us and that the old spirit still survives, so that men defy sneers and slander and hold on their way. I could tell stories which would both shock you and delight you of what is said and done by the common order

of English working men against those who profess religion, and how courageously the righteous and the true bear it all and in the long run conquer, too, and oftentimes win their mates to confess the selfsame faith. They call us all cants and hypocrites and the like, but they know better, and if they had a grain of manliness, they would cease from such lying. A true Briton gives that liberty to others which he claims for himself and if he does not choose to be religious himself, he stands up like a man to defend the rights of others to be so if they choose. Now, then, you British workmen, when shall we see you doing this?

The text speaks of a soul among lions. Why did the psalmist call them lions? "Dogs" is about as good a name as they deserve. Why call them lions? Because at times the Christian man is exposed to enemies who are very strong—perhaps strong in the jaw—very strong in biting, tearing, and rending. Sometimes the Christian man is exposed to those who loudly roar out their infidelities and their blasphemies against Christ and it is an awful thing to be among such lions as those. The lion is not only strong but also cruel and it is real cruelty, which subjects well-meaning men to reproach and misrepresentation. The enemies of Christ and His people are often as cruel as lions and would slay us if the law permitted them. The lion is a creature of great craftiness, creeping along stealthily, and then making a sudden spring—and so will the ungodly creep up to the Christian and if possible, spring upon him when they can catch him in an unguarded moment. If they fancy they spy a fault in him, they come down upon him with all their weight! The ungodly watch the righteous, and if they can catch them in their speech or if they can make them angry and cause them to speak an unguarded word, how eagerly they pounce upon him. They magnify his fault, put it under a microscope of ten thousand power and make a great thing of it. "Report it! Report it!" they say. "So would we have it!" Anything against a true-born child of God is a sweet nut for them. Such as are daily watched, daily carped at, daily abused, daily hindered in everything that is good and gracious—go with your tears before the God you serve and cry to Him, "My soul is among lions."

Now, it is to such that I am going to speak tonight. A little, at first, by *way of comfort.* And then a little *by way of advice*.

I. First, BY WAY OF COMFORT. You are among lions, my dear young friend, then *you will have fellowship with your Lord and with His church.* Every Lord's Day and every time we meet, this benediction is pronounced upon you, that you may enjoy the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Fellowship with the Holy Spirit brings you into fellowship with Jesus and this involves your being conformed to His sufferings. Now, your Lord was among lions. The men of His day had not a good word to say for Him. They called the Master of the house Beelzebub, they will never call you a worse name than that. They said that He was a drunken man and a winebibber—possibly they may say much the same as that of you and it will be equally false. You need not be ashamed to be pelted with the same dirt that was thrown at your Master and if it should ever come to this, that you should be stripped of everything and false witnesses should rise up against you and you should even be condemned as a felon and taken

out to execution, still your lot will not be worse than His. Remember that you are the followers of a Crucified Lord and cannot expect to be the world's darlings. If you are Christians, the inspired description of the Christian life is the taking up of the cross. Do you expect to be dandled on the knees of that same ungodly world which hung your Master upon the cross? No. You know that he who is the friend of this world is the enemy of God. This truth is unchangeable. It is just as certain today as it was in years gone by that, "The evil hates the righteous and gnashes upon him with his teeth." You may pick up a fashionable religion and get through the world with it very comfortably, but if you have the true faith, you will have to fight for it. If you are of the world, the world will love its own, but if you are not of the world because the Lord has chosen you out of the world, the world will hate you. When a villager goes up the little street, the dogs do not bark at him, for they know him well, but when a stranger rides along, they set up a howl. By this shall you know whether you are a citizen of the world or a pilgrim towards the better land.

Nor was your Master alone. Remember the long line of prophets that went before Christ? Which of them was it that was received with honor? Did they not stone one and slay another with the sword, cut one in pieces with a saw, put others to death with stones? You know that the march of the faithful may be tracked by their blood. And after our Lord had gone to heaven, how did the world treat the church? In the streets of Rome and all large cities, the fierce cry was often heard, "Christians to the lions! Christians to the lions! Christians to the lions!" At dead of night men cry, "Fire!" when a house is blazing or a mob will cry, "Bread!" when they are starving. But the cry of old Rome that was dearest to the Roman heart and most expressive of their horrible enmity to goodness was "Christians to the lions!" Of all the gallant shows the Roman Empire ever saw that which excited the populace beyond all things else was to see a family—a man and his wife, perhaps, and a grown-up daughter and son and three or four children all marched into the arena and the big door thrown up that out might rush the lion and spring upon them and tear them to pieces. What harm had the Christians done? They had forgiven their enemies. That was one of their great sins. They would not worship the gods of wood and stone. They would not blaspheme the name of Jesus whom they loved, for He had taught them to love one another and to love all mankind. For such things as this, men raised the cry, "Christians to the lions! Christians to the lions!" All along, this has been the cry of the world against all who have faithfully followed in the steps of Jesus Christ. Just now the merciful hand of providence prevents open persecution, but only let that hand be taken away and the old spirit will rage again. The seed of the serpent hates the seed of the woman still and if the old dragon were not chained, he would devour the man-child as he has often tried to do. Do not deceive yourselves, in one form or other the old howl of "Christians to the lions!" would soon be heard in London if almighty power did not sit upon the throne and restrain the wrath of man.

You who have to suffer a measure of persecution for Christ's sake ought to be very glad of it, for you are counted worthy not only to be

Christians, but to suffer for Christ's sake. Do not, I pray you, be unworthy of your high calling, but endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. In these afflictions you are having fellowship with your head and with His mystical body, therefore be not ashamed.

Here is another thought. If you are among lions, *you should thereby be driven nearer to your God*. When you had a great many friends, you could rejoice in them, but now that these turn against you and the truth has come home to you that, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household," what ought you to do? Why get closer to God than ever you were before. Jesus Christ so loved His church that He said, as He looked at His poor disciples, "These are my mother, and sister, and brother." You should do what your Master did—make His church your father and mother and sister and brother. Nay, better still, make Christ all these to you and more. Take the Lord Jesus to be everything that all the dearest of mortals could be and far more. Sing that charming verse, which is a great favorite of mine, for it was very precious to me in days gone by—

"If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If You remember me."

Be sure that you live near to God. All Christians ought to do so, but you especially should be driven by every false accusation, by every caustic remark, by every cutting sentence nearer to your Father's bosom. The more they rebuke you, the more constantly should you abide under the covert of His sacred wings and find your joy in the Lord.

And getting close to Christ, let me say to you now by way of advice and by way of comfort too, *endeavor to be very calm and happy*. Do not mind it. Take as little notice of the scoff as you can. It is a grand thing to have one deaf ear. Mind that you keep yourself very deaf to slander and reproach as the psalmist did when he said, "I was as a man that hears not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs." One blind eye towards the folly of enemies is often of more use to a man than two that are always looking about with suspicion. Do not see everything, do not hear everything. When there is a hard word spoken, do not notice it or if you must hear it, forget it as quickly as ever you can. Love others all the more the less they love you—repay their enmity with love. Heap coals of fire upon them by making no return to a hard speech except by another deed of kindness. Very seldom defend yourself—it is a waste of breath and casting pearls before swine. Bear and bear again. Recollect that our Lord has sent us forth as sheep among wolves and sheep cannot defend themselves. The wolf can eat all the sheep up if it likes, but do you not see, there are more sheep in the world now than there are wolves, ten thousand to one? Though the wolves have had all the eating and though there never yet was a sheep that devoured a wolf, yet the sheep are here and the wolves have gone. The sheep have won that victory and so will Christ's little flock. The anvil is struck by the hammer and the anvil never strikes in return and yet the anvil wears the hammer out. Patience baffles fury and vanquishes malice. The non-resistance principle involves a resistance which is irresistible. The steady patience that cannot be provoked, but

which, like Jesus, when reviled reviles not, is certain of conquest. This is what you persecuted ones need to learn, to get more near your God the more you are among the lions and so to be the more calm and patient the more men rage against you.

A third piece of comfort is this. Please to recollect that although your soul is among lions, *the lions are chained*. When Daniel was thrown into the lions' den, the lions were hungry and would soon have devoured him, but you know why it was that they could not touch him. Ah, the angel came. Just as the fierce lions were about to seize on Daniel, down he came swift from heaven and stood in front of them. "Hush!" he said and they lay as still as a stone. So says the text, "My God has sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths." They had fine teeth, but their mouths were shut. If the Lord can easily shut a lion's mouth, He can quite as easily shut the mouth of an ungodly man. He can take off all trouble from you, if He wills it, in an instant and He can give you a smooth path to heaven when it pleases Him. Only remember that if everything on the road to heaven were smooth, heaven would not be so sweet at the end and we should not have an opportunity of displaying those Christian graces which are brought out and educated by the opposition of the world. God will not quench the fire of persecution, for it consumes our dross, but He will moderate its power so that not a grain of pure metal shall be lost. The lions are chained, dear friend. They can go no farther than God permits. In this country the most they can do, as a rule, is to howl—they cannot bite—and howling does not break bones. Why, then, be afraid? The man who is afraid of being laughed at is not half a man, but almost deserves the scorn he receives. Never mind what is said. Talking will not hurt you. Harden your spirit against it and bear it gallantly. Go and tell your Lord of it if your heart fails you and then go forward, calm, as your Master did, fearing nothing, for God will bear you through. The lions can roar, but they cannot rend—fear them not.

Another fact for your comfort is this—*when your soul is among lions, there is another lion there* as well as the lions that you can see. Have you never heard of Him? He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. How quietly He lies! How patiently He waits by the side of His servants! The jest, the jeer, the noise continues and He still lies. If He only would—if He thought it wise—if it were not for His superlative patience, He has only to rouse Himself for one moment and all our enemies would be destroyed. Our great Lord and King could have had twenty legions of angels when He was in the garden for the lifting of His finger, but He continued alone, a suffering man. If He willed it at this day, He could sweep the ungodly away as chaff before the wind. His longsuffering is for their salvation, if haply they may turn and repent. If your faith is as it should be, it will be a great joy to you to know that He is always with you, that He is always near you. If He is ever absent from others of His servants, He is never away from His persecuted servants. Ask the Covenanters amongst the mosses and the hills and they will tell you that they never had such Sabbaths in Scotland as when they met among the crags and set their scouts to warn them against Claverhouse's dragoons. When Cargill or Cameron thundered out the Word, with what power was it attended. How

sweetly was the blessed Bridegroom with His persecuted church among the hills. There is never such a time for seeing the Son of God as when the world heats the furnace seven times hotter. There is the flaming furnace—go and stand at the mouth of it and look in. They threw three bound men into it in their clothes and in their hats and the flame was so strong that it killed the soldiers who threw them in. But look! Can you not see? Nebuchadnezzar himself comes to look. See how greatly he is astonished! He calls to those around him and he demands, "Did not we cast three men bound into the furnace? Look, there are four. A strange, mysterious form is that fourth. They are walking the coals as if they walked in a garden of flowers. They seem full of delight. They are walking as calmly as men converse in their gardens in the cool of the day and that fourth, that mysterious fourth is like the Son of God!" Ah, Nebuchadnezzar, you have seen a sight that has often been seen elsewhere. When God's people are in the furnace, God's Son is in the furnace also. He will not leave those who will not leave Him. If we can cling to Him, rest assured that He will cling to us, even to the end. Fear not the lions, then. Our Samson would turn upon them and rend them in a moment if their hour were come—

"Jesus' tremendous name
Puts all our foes to flight.
Jesus, the meek, the angry Lamb,
A Lion is in fight.
By all hell's host withstood,
We all hell's host overthrow.
And conquering them, through Jesus' blood
We still to conquer go."

Again, I want to comfort you with this word—you whose souls are among lions should recollect that *you will come out of the lions' den unharmed*. Daniel was cast into the den. Darius could not sleep that night and when he went in the morning he did not expect to find a bone of Daniel left and so he began crying out to him. How surprised he must have been when Daniel replied that his God had preserved him. How thankful he was to fetch him out of the den. You, too, dear child of God, will come out of the den all right. There will be a resurrection of God's people's bodies at last and there will be a resurrection for their reputations also. The slanderer may belie the character of a true man, but no true man's character will ever be buried long enough to rot. Your righteousness shall come forth as light and your judgment as the noonday. You need not be afraid, but that as Daniel rose from the den to dignity, so will every man who suffers for Christ receive honor and glory and immortality "in that day."

Recollect that if you are among the lions now, the day is hurrying on with speed when you shall be among the angels. Our Lord and Master, after being in the wilderness with the wild beasts, found that "angels came and ministered to Him." Such a visitation awaits all the faithful. What a change those martyrs enjoyed who took a fiery breakfast on earth, but supped with Christ that very day after riding to glory in a chariot of fire. If you have now to suffer, all that can possibly be wreaked of vengeance upon you for Christ's sake, you will think nothing of it

when you have been five minutes in heaven. Indeed, it will be a subject of congratulation that ever you were permitted in your humble measure to be counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. Therefore, be comforted, you young people, and march on with heroic step.

I see a soldier or two here tonight and I am right glad that we have generally a block of red coats in the congregation. I know that often in the barracks it is hard for a Christian man to bear witness for Jesus Christ. Many and many a soldier has found his path as a Christian to be extremely difficult. He has had to sail very carefully, like a ship among torpedoes, and only divine grace has kept him safe. Some of you who reside in large establishments, where you sleep in rooms with great many others, find it difficult even to kneel down to pray. Mind that you do it, though. Do it at first right bravely and keep it up. Never be ashamed of your colors. Begin as you mean to go on—and go on as you begin. If you begin parleying, you will soon lose all their respect and make it worse for yourself, but in the name of Jesus Christ let me beseech you to be firm and steadfast even unto death. Be comforted, for there has no new thing happened to you. It is no novelty for the followers of Jesus to be ridiculed and despised. He came to send fire on the earth and it has been kindled well-nigh two thousand years. The fiery path is the old road of the church militant, therefore tread it and be glad that you are permitted to follow the heroes of heaven in their sacred way.

II. Now, a few words BY WAY OF ADVICE. Of course this does not deal with all of you who are now present. I hope that many of you dwell among the godly. Still there are some whose soul is among lions and to them I give this counsel.

First, if you dwell among lions, *do not irritate them*. If I happened to be among lions, I would not tease them. I would take good care that if they were cruel and fierce I did not make them so. I have known some, who I hope were Christians, who have acted very unwisely and so have made matters bad for themselves. There is such a thing as ramming religion down people's throats, or trying to do so, and you can put on a very long face and try to scold people into religion. This will not do. Never yet was anybody bullied to Christ and there never will be. Some are very stern and make no allowances for other people—these may be good, but they are not wise. What is a rule to you and to me may not be a rule to everybody else. We said, the other Sunday, that we should not think of eating what we give to swine, but we do not, therefore, say, "These swine must not have their slop." No, no, it is good enough for them. Let them have it. And as to worldly people and their amusements, let them have them, poor things. They have nothing else, let them have their mirth. I would not touch their joys, nor would you, for they would be no pleasure to you, but do not, as a new-born man, go and set yourself up as the standard of what the ordinary sinner, dead in sin, is to be. He cannot come up to our standard. Do not be perpetually finding fault. That is pulling the lions' whiskers and the creatures are very likely to growl at you. If your soul is among lions, be gentle, be kind, be prudent, be tender—sometimes be silent. A good word is on your tongue, but there are times when you must not say it—for the life of you, you must not say it—

for it would rouse the lions and make more sin than need be. Sometimes a truth needs defending, but my inexperienced and untaught brother, do not try to defend it, for you have not the strength. The champion of infidelity will challenge one who is weak and uninstructed and he overthrows him—and he who came forth valorously is beaten in argument. He was not up to the mark in knowledge and so he was vanquished and then, what do the adversaries say? Why, they boast that the truth is disproved and that Christ is beaten. Nothing of the kind. The British empire was not defeated when a regiment of our soldiers were slain at Isandula—and the truth and cause of Christ is not defeated when some weak champion full of zeal rushes to the front when he ought to have kept in the rear. I do not say much on this point because we have not much rash zeal nowadays and it would be a pity to check what honest zeal there is. But still, there is such a text as, "Be you wise as serpents and harmless as doves." Put your finger on your lips when you are irritated. You cannot speak to the purpose when you are perturbed and are likely to be angry. Be quiet and bide your time. Many a man would do more good for the cause of God if he would not irritate ungodly people. Let them alone—seek their salvation lovingly and tenderly—but when your efforts to do them good only provoke them to sin, try another way. Do not go on with that which angers them—invent another method. I do believe that some Christians make half the opposition which they get from the world by their own ill tempers and stupidity. They challenge conflict. Their actions seem to say, "Who will fight me?" and then, of course, somebody takes up the challenge. Do not act foolishly, but if your soul is among lions and they are inclined to be quiet, do not needlessly excite them.

Secondly, if your soul is among lions, *do not roar yourself*, for that is very easy to be done. We have known some, who we hope were Christians, who have met railing with railing, hard words with hard words, bitter speeches with bitter speeches. The ungodly are lions and you are not—do not try to meet them in their own line. You will never roar as well as they do. If you are a Christian man, you have not the knack of roaring. Leave *them* do it. Your way of meeting them is not by losing your temper and abusing your antagonists and so becoming a lion yourself, but you must conquer them with gentleness, patience, kindness, and love. I pray you, dear brothers and sisters who have to bear a good deal for Christ's sake, do not get soured in spirit. There is a tendency in a martyr age to become obstinate and pugnacious. You must not be so. Love, love, love and the more you are provoked, love the more. Overcome evil with good. I think it necessary to mention these cautions because I know many require them.

Again, if your soul is among lions, then, *do not be cowardly*. Have you never heard that a lion is afraid of a man if he looks him steadily in the face? I am not sure about that piece of natural history, but I am quite certain that it is true with regard to the ungodly world. If a man will bear himself calmly, if he will be unmoved, determined, resolute, steadfast, he will overcome the adversary. "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." If you give way a little, you will have to give way a great deal. If you give the world an inch, you

will have to give it a mile as sure as you are alive. If you will not yield an inch, nay, nor yet a barleycorn, but stand steadfast, God will help you. Courage is what is wanted. The world, after a while, says of any man, "It is of no use laughing at him—he does not mind it. It is of no use calling him hard names—he only smiles at you. It is useless to be his enemy, for he will not be yours. He will only be your friend." Then the world whispers, "Well, after all, he is not so bad a fellow as we thought he was. We must let him have his own way." There is a big human heart somewhere down in men if you can but get at it and after a while, when truth and righteousness have suffered and been denounced, men turn round and are almost ready to carry on their shoulders with hosannas the selfsame person whom a little while before they longed to crucify. Do not be a coward! Do not be a coward!—

"Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!
The fight will not be long.
This day the noise of battle,
The next the victor's song."

Even if the fight were long, for such a Master as Jesus, it were worth while to endure ten thousand years of scorn and moreover the reward at the end will repay us a thousand-fold.

If your soul is among lions, then do not go out among them alone. "Then whom shall I take with me?" asks one, "there is not a Christian in the shop." Take your Lord with you. Be sure that you do that. Now, my dear friend, I know what they said yesterday and how they bantered you and you were tart and short with them because you had not been in prayer in the morning as you ought to have been. If your mind had been more calm and gentle as the result of prayer, you would not have minded it one-half so much. Take your Master with you and whenever you have to speak, think that He is standing at your side and try to say what you would like Him to hear, and then, when you have made your defense, you will be able to say, "Good Master, I think I have not dishonored You, for I have spoken Your words." Oh, live near to Christ if you live among lions. Those of you who endure opposition make the best Christians. Many that have been distinguished for Christ in later life have had to rough it a little at first. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." If I could bring a garden-roller and roll the grass for you all the way from here to heaven, do you think that I would do it? Certainly not. A rough place or two is good for you and it tries and strengthens pilgrim feet. A child will never become a man if he is carried about, all his life like a baby. You must run alone. You must learn the arts of holy warfare or else you will not be fit to be a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb. May His good Spirit help you to keep in fellowship with Christ that He may guard and protect you from every temptation and persecution.

Further, let me say to you that if your soul is among lions and you feel very weak about it, you are permitted to *pray the Lord to move you in His providence to quieter quarters*. A Christian man is not bound to endure persecution if he can help it, "When they persecute you in one city flee to another." You are quite warranted in seeking another situation. There may be reasons why you should remain under the trial and if so, take

care that you do not overlook them. Prudence may make you avoid persecution, but cowardice must not mingle with the prudence. That prayer which says, "Lead us not into temptation," gives us, as it were, a permit to move from places where we are much tempted and sometimes it is the duty of the Christian to seek some other sphere of labor, if he possibly can, where he will not be so much tried.

One thought more—*the braver thing is to ask for grace to stay with the lions and tame them.* "My soul is among lions." Well, if the Lord makes you a lion tamer, that is the very place where you ought to be. In some of our districts in London, as soon as ever a man is converted he feels that he cannot live there any longer and this makes the district hopeless. My dear friend, Mr. Orsman, working in Golden Lane, as it used to be, told me that his was an endless task, because as soon as ever the people were converted they would say, "Would you have me live here any longer, in such a horrible place as this?" They naturally felt that as they had grown sober and decent and respectable, they should move into a different locality and they did so, but the result is that the old spot does not improve. Sometimes the Christian man should say, "No, God has made me strong in grace and I will stop here and fight it out. These are lions, but I will tame them. I believe that God has put me here on purpose to bring my fellow workmen to the Savior and by His grace I will do it." Now, if I were a lamp I daresay that if I had my choice of where I should burn, I should choose to blaze away in a respectable street. I should like to scatter my light in front of the Tabernacle, but surely if I were a really sensible lamp, I should say to myself, "If there are only a few lamps and all the streets have to be lit, there is more necessity to light up a back slum or a blind alley than to adorn a main street. Therefore, let me shine in the dismal courts. In a lonely, dark place where murder may be done—there let me act as guardian of the night and detective of the villain." A wise lamp would say, "I came into the world to give light and I should like to give light where light is most needed. Hang me up in Mint Street or in St. Giles's or away there by the back of Kent Street, where I may be most useful."

And now, Christian people, is there not sense about this advice? Is there not reason in it? Would not your Master have you go where you are most wanted and should you not, therefore, if your soul is amongst lions, say, "Thank God it is so. These people are not going to conquer me, but I am going to conquer them"? What a beautiful spectacle was that which was exhibited by the Moravian Brethren in their grand times! They could not land on one of the West Indies to preach the gospel to the negroes, for the planters would not have anybody there but slaves, and two brethren sold themselves for slaves and lived and died in bondage that they might teach the poor negroes. It is said that there was a place in Africa where persons were shut up whose limbs were rotting away through leprosy and other diseases. Two of these brethren climbed up a wall and saw these poor creatures—some with no legs and others with no arms. They asked to be allowed to go in to win souls for Christ and the answer was, "If you enter, you can never come out again because you would bring contagion. You go in there to die, to rot away as the lepers do."

These brave men went in and died that they might bring the lepers to Christ. I hope that we have some drops of that grand Christian blood still in our veins. And if we have, we shall feel that we could go to the gates of hell to win a sinner. You are not like your Master unless you would die to save men from hell. You will bear jests and jeers and count them nothing if you can but win souls. So stop where you are, my stronger brothers and sisters—if your souls are among lions, tarry and tame the lions. It will be a grand thing for you to come, one day, to the church meeting with two or three of your neighbors whom you have been the means of converting to Christ. I like to see a man march, if he can do it, with a tame lion on each side. When a man has, by God's grace, brought some of those that were drunkards and swearers to the feet of Jesus, oh, it is a grand triumph. It has been my business for many years to be a lion tamer and I delight in it. If there is any lion of the sort here, I wish the Master would tame him and make him lie down and crouch at His feet. There is the place for us poor sinners—at the feet of Christ. But do not be afraid of sinners, dear friends, for how can you tame them if you tremble at them? Go forth to win them in the strength of the living God and you shall yet see the lion lie down with the lamb—and a little child shall lead them. Amen and amen.

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SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS—A SMOLDERING HEAP OF RUBBISH
NO. 1497

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 28, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Which say, Stand by yourself, come not near to me; for I am holier than you. These are a smoke in My nose, a fire that burns all the day."
Isaiah 65:5.

THE apostle Paul shall be our interpreter here. You remember how in the tenth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans he quotes from this chapter and says, "Isaiah is very bold and says, I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me. But to Israel He says, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people"? Isaiah was very bold to speak the gospel so plainly, when a legal spirit prevailed and very bold to defy the enmity of his own nation by declaring that they would be rejected for their sins, while the far-off heathen would be brought in by sovereign grace. He was bold to denounce hypocrites to their faces and to smite a proud nation with the threatenings of the Lord. Perhaps it was for this boldness that he suffered a cruel death by the hands of Manasseh. The application of the passage to Israel is just thus. Year after year, God dealt with great patience towards His chosen people, but they seemed to be desperately set upon idolatry in one form or another. Sometimes they worshipped Jehovah, but then they did it under figure and symbol, whereas He has expressly forbidden that even His own worship should be thus celebrated. He who said in the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before Me," also said in the second, "You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them." At other times, they altogether rejected Jehovah and worshipped Baal and Ashtaroth and whole troops of the gods of the heathen and thus they provoked the Lord exceedingly. They also practiced necromancy, or pretended communion with the dead, witchcraft and sorcery and all manners of abominable rites, like the depraved nations around them. When this open rebellion was given up, as it was after the captivity, for the Jews have never been guilty of idolatry since that day, they fell into another form of the same evil, namely, self-righteousness—so that when our Lord came, He found self-righteousness to be the crying sin of Israel—the Pharisees carrying it to such a pitch as to render it utterly ridiculous. They reckoned that the touch of a common person polluted their sacredness so that they needed to wash after walking down a street. When they traversed the ways, they took the edge of the pavement so

that they might not brush against the garments of the passers-by and even in the temple, in prayer, they stood by themselves lest they should be defiled. Their whole spirit is expressed in the words of the text, "Stand by yourself, come not near to me; for I am holier than you." This God declares to be as obnoxious to Him as smoke in a man's nose. He could not bear it. He was no more able to tolerate their self-righteousness than to endure their idolatry. It is this last form of the evil of the Israelite heart which I am going to speak about this morning, because it is a phase of evil which is now common among us. Self-righteousness is rampant in our own day. There are many who come up to the courts of the Lord's house and mingle among the followers of Christ who still say, "Stand by, for I am holier than you."

Our sermon is meant to be a cannonade against self-righteousness—that righteousness which a man makes a show of his own doings, his own feelings, his own alms, prayers, or sacraments—all such righteousness is to be utterly despised.

I. The first point is this—THE SIN OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS GROWS UP AMONG RELIGIOUS PEOPLE. It is not always the sin of the outside world, for many outsiders do not pretend to any righteousness at all and I fancy they think all the better of themselves for that. This is an idle plea which needs not many words to expose. "I make no profession," says one. This is about as honorable a confession as if a thief should boast when caught at picking pockets, "I do not make any pretense to be honest," or a liar when detected should turn round and cry, "I never professed to speak the truth." Would you have men glory in not professing to be honest or true? Yet, surely, they do no worse than one who boasts that he does not profess to fear God. Such a man has gone to a considerable pitch of iniquity before he can brazen his face to make his glory in that which is his shame.

Among those who profess to be religious, self-righteousness very frequently comes in because they have not truly received the religion of Jesus Christ. If they were true believers they would be humble and contrite, for self-righteousness and faith in Christ are diametrically opposed. He that is saved by grace finds no room for glorying in himself. What says the apostle? "Where is boasting, then? It is excluded." The word is, it is shut out and it has the door shut in its face. A sinner washed in Jesus' blood and clothed in Jesus' righteousness glories only in the Lord. He has done once and for all with that particular form of sin which glories in self. It is detestable in his sight. His cry is, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Many who mingle with Christians and are religious in a certain sense because they practice the forms of religion, are known to put the *forms* into the place of the Spirit. With them, in baptism, the washing in water is everything, but the burial with Christ which it sets forth is quite unknown. With them, the partaking of the bread and the wine are everything at the Lord's table, but the spiritual feeding upon the body and blood of Christ is not understood. With them, the place of worship is everything, but the spirit of worship is lacking. The broken heart, the contrite spirit, the soul that trembles at God's Word, the heart that joys in

the Lord, they are strangers to all this, though they can sit as God's people sit, though they can hear as God's people hear, and look as if they were all that saints should be.

These persons, too, even when they do not join the Christian church, but only worship or seem to worship with Christians, are very apt to think that they must be better than other people because they do so. They are not openly Sabbath-breakers. Is there not something in this? Yes, there is something in it, certainly, and we will not say a word against it. But there is not everything in it and certainly not enough in it to make a perfect righteousness of it. The bed is shorter than that a man may stretch himself on it and the covering is too narrow for a man to wrap himself in. "Oh, but I have occupied a seat in an orthodox chapel for many years." Yes, that may be, and if you have not received the gospel, those sermons which you have heard will rise up against you in judgment to your condemnation. It is true you close your eyes in prayer, but if you never pray, do you not mock God with a pretense of doing it, and may it not turn out that your religiousness is only an impudent provoking of God to His face? Avoid the tendency to say, "We are certainly much better than the outside world and if God is hard with us, He will be hard with a great many." Avoid this, I say, for it is the danger of outwardly religious people who are not savingly converted to dream that they are somewhat advantaged by a mere attendance on the means of grace. Should an Egyptian rub his shoulders against an Israelite, would it turn him into an Israelite? Will living near a rich man make you rich? Because the Lord Jesus eats and drinks in your streets, are you, therefore, safe, even though you have never believed on Him? Be not deceived by such a notion. Do you forget that cry of our Lord's, "Woe unto you, Chorazin. Woe unto you, Bethsaida"? Did He not proclaim woe to the very places where His voice was most often heard and where His miracles were most often worked? Beware, I pray, you outwardly religious people, lest you fall into the sin of self-righteousness and fancy that you are holy when you are not.

II. THIS IS A SIN WHICH FLOURISHES WHERE OTHER SINS ABOUND. We read of these people that they did evil before the eyes of God and chose that wherein He delighted not. They blasphemed God and polluted themselves with unhallowed rites, communing with demons and the powers of darkness, and pretending to speak with departed spirits and yet for all that, they said, "Stand by yourself, I am holier than you." Self-righteousness is never more ridiculous than in persons whose conduct would not bear scrutiny for a moment. See the Pharisee with his phylactery and his broad-hemmed garment standing there in conscious perfection! Look at him and feel disgust, for the wretched hypocrite has been secretly devouring a widow's house and his heart is full of ravening and wickedness. In his greediness and lust, he makes clean the outside of his cup and platter, but within he is full of extortion and excess. Hear how the devil derides him. "Ah, ah," he laughs with satanic glee, "the outside may be as you will. What care I, while the inside is foul!" It is dreadful that any man should be self-righteous, but it is monstrous that men of openly evil lives should dare to set up such a pretense. Such per-

sons know, if they will but think, that they are trying to palm off a barefaced lie. Yet it is common enough in spiritual things for those who are naked and poor and miserable to declare that they are rich and increased in goods. How are they able to keep up this imposture upon their own consciences? Is it not a part of their spiritual madness? The very blindness which makes them choose sin prevents their seeing how sinful it is and enables them to fancy that all is well. As men who wear spectacles of colored glass find all things tinted with their own hue, so does a self-righteous heart impart a tint to actions till the worse appears the better and sin glitters like righteousness.

Moreover, self-righteous men, like foxes, have many tricks and schemes. They condemn in other people what they consider to be very excusable in themselves. They would cry out against others for a tenth part of the sin which they allow in themselves. Certain constitutional tendencies, necessities of circumstances, and various surroundings all serve as ample apologies. Besides this, if it is admitted that they are wrong upon some points, yet in other directions they are beyond rebuke. If they drink, they do not swear, and if they swear, they do not steal. They make a great deal out of negatives. If they steal, they are not greedy and miserly, but spend their gains freely. If they practice fornication, yet they do not commit adultery. If they talk filthily, yet they boast they do not lie. They would be counted well because they are not universally bad. They do not break every hedge and therefore they plead that they are not trespassers. As if a debtor for a hundred pounds should claim to be excused because he does not owe two hundred. Or as if a highwayman should say, "I did not stop all the travelers on the road. I only robbed one or two and therefore I ought not to be punished." If a man should willfully break the windows of your shop, I warrant you, you would not take it as an excuse if he pleaded, "I did not break them all. I only smashed one sheet of plate glass." Pleas which would not be mentioned in a human court are thought good enough to offer to God. O the folly of our race!

Besides, these people will make righteousness this way—they plead that if they do wrong, yet there are some points in which they are splendid fellows. "You should see how grandly I acted on such an occasion. You will think me almost a saint and quite a hero if you will but fix your eyes on that one particular virtue. Drink, sir? No, I never touch a drop." I am glad you do not, but still, if you live in lying or in pride, your abstinence is a short piece of stuff to make a garment out of. The mere fact that you are not a drunkard is so far good, but it goes a very little way towards the perfect righteousness which God's law demands.

Some one thing in which the unconverted man may excel is put in to make up for his deficiencies in a hundred other ways. By hook or by crook, a man will make out that he is not so bad as he seems to be—the inventiveness of self-esteem is extraordinary. Those who come with the language of repentance, but without the spirit of it, are sometimes the most self-righteous of all, for they say, "I am all right because I am not self-righteous." They make a self-righteousness out of the supposed absence of self-righteousness. "Thank God," they say, "we are not as other men are, nor even as these self-righteous people." Hypocrites all the way

through. Have you ever heard of the monk who said he was a very great sinner? He said that he had broken all the Ten commandments, that he was as bad as Judas and deserved to be hanged as well as he, and when his confessor began to go over the commandments, he said about each one of them, "Holy father, I have not broken that, I have kept that." He was a sinner in the gross, but not in detail. A sinner by name, but not in reality—so he said—and hosts of people virtually say the same. Hear them, "Yes, sir, of course I am a sinner. We are all sinners." But if you bring one fault home to them, straightway they bristle up. Who are you that you should speak evil of them? They have done nothing amiss—they are most excellent people—and you will go a long way to find anybody better than they are and so on. Oh, this horrible self-righteousness. It is not merely to be found in the man who attends his church regularly and reads his prayers daily, it is found in the man who will not go to his church nor say his prayers. The harlot has her self-righteousness. The thief, the drunkard, the profane still have their self-justifications. Yes, and it may be seen even in Atheists who have cast off all fear of God and then stand in an elevation of self-esteem which hardly any other man can match. Hear him, "I have proved my freedom of thought and nobility of mind. I am the model man. As for these Christians, they are cants and hypocrites and believers in Christ are either fools or knaves. No man has any honest and rational convictions but myself. I can improve upon the Bible and criticize the life of Christ. Stand by yourself. I am holier than you." This weed of self-righteousness will grow on any dunghill. No heap of rubbish is too rotten for the accursed toadstool of proud self to grow upon.

III. As self-righteousness grows among sins to our surprise, so IT IS IN ITSELF A GREAT SIN. One is almost startled to find self-esteem placed after such a list of sins as this chapter records. To the Jew, the eating of swine's flesh and broth of all abominable things was a great pollution, but self-righteousness is classed with it—it is even placed with necromancy and witchcraft. Drunkenness and swearing are sins in rags, but self-righteousness is sin in a respectable black coat. It is an aristocratic sin and does not like to be put down with the common ruck, and if we even call it *sin*, yet many will plead that it is only so in a very refined sense. But God does not think so. He classes it with the very worst and He does so because it is one of the worst. For a man to be self-righteous is in itself a sin of sins. For, first, it is blasphemy. Perhaps you do not see that. Follow me, then. God is holy. Here comes this base imposter and boasts, "And I am holy, too." Is not that a ludicrous and contemptible form of blasphemy? It is profanity in its very essence. The cherubim are crying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts: heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Your glory" and amid it all there is heard this squeaking pretender, whining, "And I am holy, too." O wretched egotist, you do at once lie and blaspheme! The heavens are not pure in His sight. He charged His angels with folly and do you, that are born of woman and defiled from head to foot, dare to talk about righteousness? Righteousness, indeed! when you are but a mass of sin.

More, this self-righteousness is idolatry, for the man who counts himself to be righteous by his own works worships himself. Practically, the object of his adoration is his own dear, delectable, excellent self. All his confidence is in himself. His boasting is in himself and though he may sing psalms to God with his voice, yet his heart is really singing hymns to himself and he is saying to himself, "You have done well, my soul. There is something great and bright in you. You deserve much of your Creator. You shall surely enter heaven on your own terms. At your worst, you have never been so bad as your fellow men—at your best you are a right noble being and a brilliant reward is your due." What is this but idolatry in its worst form?

Then, again, it is profanity, for it gives God the distinct lie. The Lord declares that no man is righteous. He says that He looked from heaven and surveyed the sons of men and He saw that, "There is none righteous, no, not one." To this divine assertion, self-righteousness gives a flat contradiction, for it claims to be itself holy. God declares that we have gone astray and altogether become unprofitable and He proves that He believes this, for He sets Christ to bleed and die for the world of sinners, as it is written, "All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." But He could not lay our iniquity upon Jesus if we had none, nor impute transgression to Christ if there were no sin in us and thus the self-righteous man virtually declares that God is false and speaks not the strict truth, since he claims to be an exception to the rule. He testifies that God's "No, not one," is false, for he himself is one righteous person and therefore there may be others. Though God says that by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified in His sight, yet this man says, "By the works of the law I shall be justified," and so he profanes the Word of the Most High and questions the truth of God, which is as the apple of Jehovah's eye. It is clear beyond all question that self-righteousness is in itself a great, God-defying sin. May the Lord deliver us from it and by the Holy Spirit work in us a humble, lowly faith in Jesus Christ, the Lord.

IV. In the fourth place, we would remark that SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE FRUIT OF MAN'S OWN THOUGHTS. Look at the second verse of the chapter, "I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walks in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts." Those who have high thoughts of themselves do not walk according to God's commandments, but according to their own notions. If any man thinks himself to be righteous in himself, he has never derived that idea from God's *law*. Read the Ten Commands, understand their spirituality, and know that they concern not only overt deeds but thoughts and imaginations, and you will see that the law condemns us all without exception. It proves our guilt, reveals our proneness to evil, pronounces a curse upon us, and gives us over to condemnation. It pays us no respect, but shuts us up in hopeless despair. A man who is self-righteous, therefore, did not derive his self-esteem from a true consideration of the law. No Jew that stood at Sinai and saw the mountain on a smoke and heard the words which sounded forth with noise as of tempest and trumpet, dared to stand there and say, "I am righteous."

But crouching away, moving further and further from the burning mountain, the best Israelite begged that these words might not be spoken to him anymore, for he could not endure the terror of that thrice holy law. A Pharisee stands on an elevation raised by his own fancy, for the law would pull him down and never for a moment set him up. His proud notions come not from the law and certainly not from the gospel, for the gospel knows no man after the flesh as righteous, but it regards all men as sinners and comes to them with pardon. It treats men as lost and comes to save them. If there is a man in the world who is pure and perfect by nature, the gospel has nothing to say to him, for it was not intended to meet such a case. Its medicines are not for those upon whom the sickness of sin has never come, for, "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." Our great Lord came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Jesus is the sinner's friend. Christ came to wash away stains, not to flatter men into a notion of their spotlessness. He came to heal the sick, not to applaud the vigorous. To such as are righteous in themselves, there is not a single syllable of promise in the entire gospel—why should there be, for they need it not? Self-righteousness is a child which neither law nor gospel will own—it is born in the house of folly and it is nursed by human fancy.

Self-righteous people are not much inclined to search *the Scriptures*—they do not read them with an understanding heart so as to get the meaning—they rather make the Bible say their own meaning and twist it to support their own pleasing dream. Like a battery of ordinance of the strongest kind, both law and gospel fire into the sinner's righteousness and sink it, like a riddled hulk, into the deeps of the sea.

"But cannot a man arrive at a religion by his own unaided thoughts?" asks one. A great many have tried it, but the very idea is absurd. Facts about God and man are to be learned and not invented. Suppose a man were to think out the science of botany, but never went to see the flowers? He would deliver strange botanical lectures, misleading and absurd, for no cogitation upon what a flower ought to be would ever enable a man to guess at what flowers really are. Suppose a man who never looked at the stars were to despise the telescope and depend on his thoughts for his astronomy? Would he not make strange work of it? We have heard of the German who carefully thought out, in his own inward consciousness, a camel and there are many people of the same order of learned ignorance and profound folly. Such do not look at what the gospel is, but they have their own notions of what it ought to b. They do not look at what revelation declares, but at what their own precious thoughts can manufacture. Half the people in the world make their own theology and are either too idle or too proud to be guided by the infallible Scripture. As many a vintner composes his own wine, so do these concoct their own doctrine and by this means they arrive at a high opinion of their own goodness. Like the spider, they make their web out of their own bowel. They are righteous and by no means the sort of persons which the Word of God declares them to be. He whose foundation is his own dream is certain to be deceived. Listen, O man, and learn wisdom. God's thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are His ways your ways, and in

the day when He comes to deal with your fancied righteousness, He will make short work of it and you will have to cry, "We all do fade as a leaf and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags and our iniquities like the wind have carried us away." The sooner that happens the better, for if it comes not until you get into the next world, it will be dreadful then to be found naked where you never can be clothed, to have your fancied riches melt into a poverty from which you never can recover, to be made a bankrupt where you thought yourself wealthy, and in a world where you never can begin again. Woe to those who make eternal shipwreck while they dream that they are steering straight to the desired haven. God save you from setting up to furnish yourselves with inspiration. You are not oracles and should never dream of being so. Search the Scriptures to know the facts of your case and then you will recoil from the very idea of the righteousness of unrenewed man. Your glory will become your shame. Your spangled robes will turn to worthless rags and you will accept, with humble gratitude, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

V. This leads us on to our fifth remark which is this—SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS HAS THIS VICE ABOUT IT, THAT IT ALWAYS LEADS TO DESPISING OTHERS. That is the meat of the text. They said, "Stand by yourself, come not near to me; for I am holier than you." The self-righteous think thus of one another—one sinner dreads pollution from another, one rebel is alarmed lest he should be made disloyal by another. Think of a wretch condemned to die for his sin and yet afraid that a fellow criminal might soil his innocence. To what a pitch of madness does pride lift itself! "Do not come near me; I am holy," cries the man steeped in sin. Oh, the absurdity of self-righteousness! This pride is loathsome to the last degree.

This pride is seen to be still more loathsome when the proud self-deceiver bids the lowly penitent man stand off. The repenting publican has his eyes opened to his real state and he goes up to the temple and prays, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He does not dare look up. He is so broken-hearted, but yonder Pharisee is bold to thank God for his own surpassing virtues. See how he gathers up his garment for fear the fringe of his raiment should touch the ground whereon the publican has set his polluting foot. Why, sirs, that publican was one of God's jewels and this abominable Pharisee was a mere dunghill, reeking with offensive self-conceit. He did not know it, but his self-righteousness made him despise the very man of whom God has said, "To this man will I look, and with him will I dwell; even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembles at My Word."

"Oh," says one of my free-thinking, but self-righteous hearers, "I hate such cant. Confessing sin is all nonsense. I cannot endure to hear such talk." We are well aware of that, good sir, but this weighs not with us. We know you very well and recognize in you an old acquaintance of some nineteen hundred years standing. Proud Pharisees never can endure penitent publicans, nor their Savior either. They are always saying of the Lord's ministers that which they once said of Himself, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." They find fault with the great Advocate and His clients, with the great Physician and His patients, but the Redeem-

er's kingdom waits not their patronage and fears not their opposition. If you reject the banquet of mercy and will not come to it, there are others who shall and your refusal shall bring on your own head the contempt you now reserve for others.

Yes, and this self-righteous spirit dares to pour its bitterness upon the most gracious men. If you want a thorough-paced persecutor, find a self-righteous man. I tell you there is no venom in the heart of dissolute, debauched men against Christianity that is at all comparable to the poison of asps which lies in the heart of the self-righteous man. Who was it in Jerusalem that hunted down the saints? It was not some son of Belial who railed at them. I daresay that many a Jerusalem rioter said, "What does it matter? They have their ways and I have mine—let the men alone." But there was one man in Jerusalem who above most others thought that verily he had kept all the commandments of God from his youth up and was utterly blameless and he hated the Christians because they preached a doctrine which struck at his self-esteem. Therefore, he despised men who were a hundred times better than himself. He dragged them into the synagogue and scourged them to compel them to blaspheme. And when he had done all he could in his own country to worry them, he obtained letters from the high priest that he might go to Damascus to hunt them even in strange cities. He verily thought he did God service when he breathed out threatenings and bloodshed against God's own children. Yes, it is so and must be so. They that are born after the flesh persecute them that are born after the Spirit. Ishmael, the child of Hagar the bondwoman, which comes from Sinai, in Arabia, hates the Isaac that is born of the free woman, according to promise. There is a deadly feud between these two and this is a part of the sin of self-righteousness, that it sets itself so bitterly against Christ and His people and is the direst opponent that the gospel has among men. We see the self-righteous spirit at times display itself in the papers when they touch on religious subjects. One of them lately condemned the hymn—

"Sinner, nothing do, either great or small,
Jesus did it, did it all, long, long ago."

This is shocking doctrine, so they say, for it denies salvation by good works! Of course, editors of papers are good judges, for they are so exceedingly careful of our morality and so studious never to insert anything that could injure our purity. That precious, plainspoken bit of gospel verse is too much for our pious friend, the editor, and he is afraid that it will hurt our morals. Self-righteousness is always afraid of the gospel, lest the uncompromising truth should unmask its self-deceit. Why, sirs, the doctrine of justification by faith alone is the essence of Protestantism and the soul of the gospel. That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and that salvation is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by the sovereign grace of God who passes by transgression, iniquity, and sin is the great truth for which Reformers protested and martyrs died. Let those who deny it look to themselves.

VI. But I must pass on to observe that SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS IS MOST ABOMINABLE IN THE SIGHT OF God. What does He compare it to? He says, "It is a smoke in My nose, a fire that burns all the day." At

the bottom of the garden, we gather together the dead leaves and all the rubbish of the garden and the heap is lighted and it keeps on burning and smoldering all day—and if you go and stand in the eye of the wind, your eyes will smart, your nose will be offended, and you will feel that you cannot bear it. As you see the refuse burning, smoking, smoldering all day, it will tell you what the Lord thinks of man's righteousness. This is His opinion of those who say," Stand by, I am holier than you." Their boasted righteousness is a burning heap of rubbish pouring forth a thick smoke most obnoxious to Him. We do not wonder that He thus scorns and abhors proud, self-righteousness, for God is a God of truth and truth cannot bear a lie and self-righteousness is a mass of lies. He who is of perfect nature cannot bear mere pretense. It is so among men in common matters. You introduce a man of real learning to a person who has purchased for himself a sham degree and who boasts that he is a classical scholar. Mark his disgust when the pretender quotes a Latin author and in the very first sentence gives false facts. The truly learned man says, "He is a disgrace to his title. Let me get away from him. He pretends to be a doctor and yet he makes all these blunders." He who possesses the reality is indignant with the counterfeit. Now, God is truly holy and cannot, therefore, bear that these men should talk about a holiness which they have no claim to and vaunt themselves and brag within themselves of a thing that is not theirs. The true God, therefore, calls them a smoke in His nose.

Moreover, self-righteousness is such a proud thing. God is always provoked with pride. It is one of the evils which His soul hates. He daily fits His arrow upon His string to fetch down the proud in heart. The self-righteous man is proud in himself and proud with a contemptuous sneer at others and therefore the Lord abhors him.

Self-righteousness also denies the wisdom of God's plan and is utterly opposed to it. God's present plan of working in the world goes upon the theory that we are guilty—being guilty, He provides a Savior for us and sends us a gospel full of grace. His whole system is a gigantic blunder if we are or can be righteous in and of ourselves. The work of the Holy Spirit is needless if we can be of ourselves fit for heaven. The whole character of this gracious dispensation is a mistake if man is not guilty. The man who says, "I am righteous," virtually casts a slur upon a work which is meant to be the highest display of the divine love and wisdom. He is like the Greek to whom the cross of Christ was "foolishness." I venture to say that self-righteousness in effect makes Christ Himself to be a superfluity and this, my brethren, is the unkindest cut of all. This is a stab at the heart of the great Father. Did Jesus come down from heaven and take our nature because we were sinners and in that nature did He give Himself as a sacrifice that He might put away sin, and was all this a mistake? Calvary, are you a blunder? Bleeding Savior, were You an amiable enthusiast, putting away sin which did not exist and filling a fountain for the removal of stains which are not to be found? Yet self-righteousness involves all this. If one sinner has a right to be self-righteous, so has another. And then it comes to this—that God should deal with us all on quite another theory and instead of His dear Son coming to the world to

die for us as sinners, we might all go to heaven without an atonement or a Savior. Do you think God can bear such a slur upon Christ, such a trampling on the precious blood of His own Son? Can even long-suffering bear this?

I may be speaking to some who have not before considered what their self-righteousness means, but I hope they see it now. Get rid of it, my dear friends. Put off your ornaments of fancied virtue and put the dust and ashes of confession on your heads. Go home and tear your finery to pieces and put on the robe of heavenly righteousness, otherwise you will be as long as you live nothing but that smoking heap of weeds at the bottom of the garden. And whereas you think you are a bright and shining light, God's thoughts will be the reverse, for He will count you to be a mere smother of smoke in His nose, a fire that smolders all the day.

VII. The last point and one of the most practical is this, that SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS MOST EFFECTUALLY BARS A MAN FROM ALL HOPE OF SALVATION. We cannot be saved unless we become truly holy, but, my brethren, no man ever becomes truly holy who is content with a false holiness. If he says, "I am holy," he never will be holy. The student who enters college as a wise man will probably remain a fool. You never can win wisdom till you confess your folly. The man who says, "I am rich," but is under a delusion which makes him call copper gold, will never be rich—it is a first necessity that he be able to estimate his true estate. So that self-righteousness shuts a man out from real righteousness most effectually.

It also prevents the heart from repentance. How can you repent if you have never sinned? How can you mourn your failure to obey while you conceive that you have kept the law? It shuts you out, too, from faith. You never will believe in Jesus Christ while you believe in yourself. "How can you believe," said Christ, "that receive honor one of another?" If you can save yourself, you do not want a Savior and consequently you will never trust in the Savior of sinners. Man, while you are righteous, Christ and your heart will never agree. He brings you water, but you are not thirsty. He brings you the bread of life, but you are not hungry. He has made a raiment of needlework for you, but you are not naked. He comes to enrich you, but you are not poor. He comes to give you pardon, but you are not guilty. He comes to give you everlasting life, but you are not dead. What is there, then, in Christ for you? Just nothing, and so you will never have Christ.

All the entreaties of God, even such as are described in this chapter when He stretches out His hands all day, will never make a self-righteous person come to Him. The prodigal did not say, "I will arise and go unto my father" while he could fill his belly with the husks that the swine ate. Soul poverty and destitution bring a man to God, but God may call as long as He wills—man never will come as long as he can be independent of his heavenly Father. So that self-righteousness is the ruin of all who harbor it.

Let me warn you who have heard the gospel continually, that if you are self-righteous, the privileges which you enjoy will be all neutralized and cease to be privileges. For if you do not come to Jesus when He

stretches out His hands, He will call others who are not now a people and He will be found of those that sought Him not. You are first now in point of privilege, but the first shall be last, while those outside that have not heard the gospel shall hear it and be saved, and so the last shall be first. God will turn the tables upon you—the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, while many shall come from the east and from the west and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. Beware, you who are self-righteous, lest, because you put yourselves to be the head, God should make you the tail, for then all your Sabbath privileges and gospel hearings will be like millstones about your necks, to sink you low as the lowest hell.

What is the remedy for all this? The remedy is just this. God says, "Behold Me." That is to say, He bids you cease from doting upon your own fancied beauties and worshipping your own foolish image. Look first to the holy God and tremble. Can you, of yourself, ever be like Him—pure, spotless and glorious? Can you ever hope to deserve anything from Him? Look to Him and despair. Then comes the second, "Behold Me." See Christ Jesus on the cross dying, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. As you see Him dying, your self-righteousness will die. You will say, "He would never have suffered thus for me unless I had sin to repent of. God would never have put Him to this grief for me unless I had been sadly guilty. I should never have wanted such a Savior if I had not been a great transgressor. In the heights and depths of dying love, I read the heights and depths of my accursed sin. In the infinity of the atonement, I read the boundless blackness of my guilt and lie humble before God. At the same time, in that perfect righteousness divine, which has put away sin, I see the hope of a sinner and as a sinner I look to Christ for everything." If you do this, it is well. God blesses you. May everyone here be enabled to do this immediately and unto God shall be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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MISTRUST OF GOD DEPLORED AND DENOUNCED
NO. 1498

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 5, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"How long will it be before they believe Me?"
Numbers 14:11.

THE children of Israel were very prone to unbelief. They wanted something visible to worship and to trust. They could not learn the lesson of faith in the one great Invisible and therefore they were one day bowing before an idol and the next they were murmuring against the true God. Their life was according to the flesh, after the sight of the eyes and the hearing of the ears, and hence they praised God when Pharaoh was drowned and when manna lay round about their camp, but the moment they were in want or difficulty and saw no supply or relief, they could not trust in God, but began to mistrust and murmur. With what wonderful longsuffering the Lord bore with them! His mercy seemed to outrun their unbelief. They cried for water and they doubted God's power to give it to them in the desert sands, but lo, the smitten rock poured forth a crystal stream. Then they cried for bread and charged the Lord with bringing them into the wilderness to kill them with hunger, and yet in answer to their murmuring, the heavens were opened and there fell a shower of angels' food for them to feast upon.

They then clamored for flesh and they had not long began their unbelieving murmuring before a strong wind brought them up quail till they fed, even to the full. Such liberal answers to their vexatious murmuring ought to have silenced their fears and they should henceforth have exhibited confidence in their great Friend. Yet they did not do so, but for 40 years they provoked the Lord. The incident before us relates to that great and terrible provocation in which the longsuffering of God came to a pause. They sent spies into Canaan and when they were informed by 10 false-hearted men that the giants were in the land and that the inhabitants of it dwelt in walled cities which they could not hope to capture, they then began to accuse the Lord according to their former manner, denying His power to fulfill His ancient covenant and give them the land that flowed with milk and honey. This time the Lord lifted His hand and swore that they should not enter into His rest. Let us be warned by this fact that there is a limit to the longsuffering of God and especially when it is tried by distrust. He may bear with unbelief for a time and blessed be His name, for a long time, for He remembers that we are dust. But when it comes to willful perseverance in unbelief, the Lord will not forever be thus provoked. It behooves us to listen to the words of Paul, "Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest,

any of you should seem to come short of it." This morning my one subject is this sin of unbelief which I desire to deal with in the fear of God and in the power of His Holy Spirit.

I. Our first head shall be the sin of Israel is here DEFINED. "HOW long will it be before they believe Me?" Observe that God's account of all the murmuring and discouragement and fear which these people felt was simply that they did not believe Him. They doubtless said that they were naturally afraid of their enemies—the Anakim, the sons of the giants—these would overtop and overcome them. They seemed like grasshoppers in the sight of such gigantic beings and therefore they might well tremble. Had the Anakim been ordinary men, however numerous their bands, Israel declared that they should not have been afraid, but these huge monsters created a natural and unavoidable fear. "No," says God, "that is an idle excuse. No fear of giants would enter their minds if they believed Me. How long will it be before they believe Me?" If these sons of Anak had been ten times as high as they were, yet the almighty Lord could vanquish them, and if their cities had been literally as well as figuratively walled up to the skies, yet Jehovah could smite them out of heaven and cast their ramparts into the dust. Gigantic men and fortified cities are nothing to Him who divided the Red Sea. When the Omnipotent is present, opposition vanishes. This was so clear that if the Israelites were afraid, the real reason was that they did not believe their God. So, my brethren, let us strip our discouragements and murmurings of all their disguises and see them in their true character and they will appear in their own naked deformity as discrediting God. It is true the difficulty before us may appear great, but it cannot be great to the Lord who has promised to make us more than conquerors. It is true the circumstances may appear unusually perplexing, but they cannot perplex Him who has promised to guide us with His counsel. And since we are well aware of this, it is clear that the true reason why we are so dismayed is not to be found in the difficulties and the circumstances, but in our misgivings of God.

"Ah," but these people might have replied, "we fear because of our weakness. We are not a trained host like the armies of Egypt. We know not how to fight against chariots of iron. We are only feeble men with all these women and children to encumber our march. We cannot hope to drive out the hordes of Amalekites and Canaanites. A sense of weakness is the cause of our terror and complaint." But the Lord puts the matter very differently. What had their weakness to do with His promise? How could their weakness affect His power to give them the land? He could conquer Amalek if they could not. Caleb had told them, "If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land." They knew that their feebleness had not prevented the Lord's bringing them out of Egypt, despite the pride and power of Pharaoh, and they must have known that He could with equal ease overthrow the Canaanites and their armies. Their weakness could only be a foil to the glory of the divine power, so that it would be made the more conspicuous. We also, when we plead our weakness, ought to be ashamed, for we know that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. If we probe to the bottom of those

doubts and fears which apparently arise out of a sense of our own weakness, we shall find that they spring from mistrust of God. Our trembling is not humility, but unbelief. We may mask it however we please, but that is the state of the case as God sees it and He sees it in truth. The question is not, "How long will they be weak?" but, "How long will it be before they believe *Me?"*

"No, no," the people may have said, "we are not murmuring against God. It is against Moses and Aaron. They made a mistake when they brought us into the wilderness and they have undertaken an enterprise which they cannot carry through—we blame these two men for their foolhardiness." But the Lord would not have it so. Moses and Aaron were only His instruments and mere second causes and the Lord will not allow that the quarrel is with them, but He asks, "How long will it be before they believe Me?" Thus, brethren, we sometimes fix upon our fellow man his infirmity, his shortsightedness, his want of wisdom, and we say that we do not doubt God, but we can never feel secure while our leaders or our friends are such poor, unwise creatures. If you put this pretext to the test, you will see that it avails nothing, for God can use what instruments He pleases, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, and He can accomplish His purposes despite their frailty. His word is not to fall to the ground because of the medium through which He carries it into effect. Strip our distrust of the agents whom God employs of all the masks with which it seeks to disguise itself and it comes to this—we do not believe God.

Our dreading and complaining are often a kind of practical atheism. I mean this, that if God has pronounced a promise and we doubt its fulfillment for any cause whatever, we think and feel as if there were no God. We profess to believe that the promises of Scripture are the promises of God Himself and it follows that if we doubt their fulfillment, we do as good as deny the Godhead of the Promiser, since he who cannot or will not keep his promises cannot be God at all. The Word of the true God has been proven to be omnipotent by its creating force and therefore promises which are not of like power cannot be the Word of the one almighty God. Dare we make it out that God speaks frivolously and that His solemn promises are like the false words of man, which mock the ears and disappoint the hope? Are God's promises like yon withered leaves which the passing wind bears into forgetfulness? Then I say that such a God is no God at all and such a conception sets up a false god and robs the true God of His essential character. Is it not so? Sometimes we put our doubts in one shape and sometimes in another, and we are apt to claim that we do not really doubt God for we know that He both can and will keep His promises as a rule, but for certain reasons we doubt whether He will keep His word to us. We talk of our unworthiness and so on, but being interpreted, our inmost thought is that we can believe anything of God but that which is the most necessary for us to believe. We believe all other words but that very one which we are most called upon to credit. Strange faith, which will exert itself everywhere but where it is wanted! We claim that if things were otherwise than they are, we could believe God, and what is this but to say that under existing cir-

cumstances we do not conceive Him to be worthy of our confidence? He who doubts that particular promise which God speaks to him may as well doubt all the rest, since they all hang together and they are either all of them falsehoods or all of them eternal truths. Yes, this is the essence of it—our timorous suspicions of any one promise are a reflection upon the Lord Himself.

So, brethren, I come back to that first point and solemnly declare that though our doubts and fears are called oftentimes by more respectable names, because we do not like to see their sin in all its nakedness, yet they come to this—that we do not believe the ever-blessed God. If we look at our discouragement and mistrust in this light, we shall no longer pity, but blame ourselves, and instead of excusing, we shall accuse our heart of a great crime. Mistrust towards God is not a mere weakness, it is a wickedness of the gravest order.

II. We will now proceed, in the second place, to further DESCRIBE this sin of not believing. I would remark, first, that at the first blush *it would seem incredible* that there should be such a thing in the universe as unbelief of God. That God should manifest Himself to man so as to make a promise to Him is indescribable condescension. One would think that the high and lofty One would abide in His eternal silence, or communicate Himself to the most exalted creatures rather than speak to such a being as man. What is man that God should be mindful of him and speak to him? Yet we believe that the Lord has often spoken to us by His prophets and in these last days by His Son. Now, if an angel altogether unacquainted with human history could be informed that God had spoken to men, I imagine that his astonishment would be overwhelming if we also informed him that men have disbelieved Him. "What!" he would say. "What! Dare to disbelieve the Lord! Doubt the Lord, whose infinite love stooped to speak with His creature! God, who is essential truth and cannot possibly lie nor deceive—have there been creatures vile enough to perpetrate such an insult upon their Maker, their Benefactor? Can they suspect the infinitely pure of deceit? Dare they question the truth of the perfect One whom cherubim adore?" I say that an angel would be staggered at such blasphemy. Why, look, sirs, the Lord spoke to nothingness and out came this globe, swathed in the swaddling bands of darkness. He spoke again and forth leaped the light and all things were quickened into life and clothed with beauty. The power of His word was all creating—and is it to be imagined or conceived that this word can be a lie? Jehovah's word is but Himself in action. His will making itself manifest. And is it to be supposed that this can be a lie under any conceivable circumstances whatever? My brethren, it is sorrowful to have to confess that what looks like inconceivable blasphemy has, nevertheless, been perpetrated abundantly by the sons of men. Shame on our race that ever it should thus have insulted the Most High God! Oh, the incredible infamy which lies even in the bare thought of calling in question the veracity of God. It is so vile, so unjust, so profane a thing that it ought to be regarded with horror as a monstrous wrong.

Consider, next, that, though unbelief certainly exists, *it is a most unreasonable thing*. If God has made a promise, on what grounds do we

doubt its fulfillment? Which of all the attributes of God is that which comes under suspicion? Probably the first distrusted attribute will be His power. Have not men said, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Or can He deliver us out of the deep waters?" Let us think of this. Has the Lord promised to supply and deliver? Then, my dear friend, do you really in your sober senses question the power of God to do as He has said? Has He not made the heavens and the earth? Do not all things subsist by His continuous power? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is His arm shortened that He cannot save? Is His hand paralyzed that He cannot achieve His purpose? The more we consider the supposition that God is unable to keep His promises, the more we discard it with indignation. It is not to be entertained for a moment. What, then, is it God's goodness that we suspect? After He has filled the world with bounty and multiplied His loving kindnesses to His creatures—above all, after He has given from His bosom His only-begotten Son to die as the fulfillment as well as the seal of the great promises of His covenant—dare we question His goodness? Do we call God evil? Do we impute unkindness to Him? Let horror seize us at the suggestion of such thought. Let our bones quake that we should ever tolerate the hideous libel upon Him whose very name is good. For what is "God" but "good" written in brief? It must come back to this with which we started, that we suspect the truth of God and yet the more we shall consider the supposition, the more we shall be alarmed by its blasphemous character. Do you believe, O man, the creature of God, that your Maker can belie Himself? Do you imagine that He can forswear Himself? With reverence do I speak the word, and awe is upon me as I utter it—do you profanely dream that He can perjure Himself? Every promise of His is virtually sealed with that oath by which the covenant is confirmed. He has lifted His hand to heaven and sworn *by Himself*, because He could swear by no greater, that by two immutable things wherein it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation. Reason itself teaches that the Judge of all must Himself be just, and this He could not be if He were not true. Truth enters into the very conception of God—a false god is no God. Any other doubt in the world may plead some ground and warrant, but a doubt of God's truthfulness is utterly unreasonable, and if sin had not filled man with madness, unbelief would never find harbor in a single bosom.

Again, because this sin is so unreasonable, *it is also most inexcusable*. Let me try, if I can, to frame an excuse for doubting the truthfulness of the Lord our God. Look back upon your own experience and take with it the experience of all men that have ever lived and find, if you can, a single instance in which God has been untrue to the word He has spoken. We challenge eternity to divulge such an instance. We appeal to all mankind, from Adam to the latest born, and to angels, yes—and to devils themselves, to produce one single case in which Jehovah has turned from promise or from threatening so as to forfeit His word. His faithfulness is indisputable. The ages witness it. Now, if there had been one instance, we might be justified in our misgivings. If we could find one authenticated case, fully established, in which God had acted contrary to

His promise or failed to keep His word, then we might lawfully distrust, but as we can never find such a case, what excuse can we make?

Moreover, when a man is suspected of untruthfulness, we usually impute to him some motive for it—he has something to gain by the lie and therefore we suppose he will prove false. But what motive can be imputed to the Lord Most High which could lead Him to forfeit His word? He knows all things from the beginning and therefore even if it were supposable that to keep a promise would be inconvenient to Him, He would never have made it, for He would have foreseen that inconvenience. God is not bound to promise and therefore if the good deed were not to His mind, He would not promise to perform it. Nor has God changed, since immutability is essential to His being. If, therefore, He has uttered a word, you may rest quite sure that it will stand fast—an unchangeable being cannot be fickle and run back from His promise. Why, my friends, it is to God's glory to keep His word. As it is to the glory of every man to be upright, so is it to the glory and honor of God to be faithful to His solemn declarations. Even on the lowest conceivable ground, the Lord's own interests are bound up with His truth. All the glory of His name and the honor of His divine person bend towards the keeping of His word. There is no supposable reason why the Lord should not be true. How dare we, then, without the slightest cause, cast suspicion upon the truthfulness of the Most High?

My dear brethren, I venture to say that unbelief of God's word *ought*, therefore, *to be impossible*. It ought to be impossible to every reverent-hearted man. Does he know God and tremble in His presence and shall he think of distrusting and doubting Him? No one that has ever seen Him in contemplation and bowed before Him in sincere adoration, but must be amazed at the impertinence that would dare to think that God could lie. O reverent heart, it ought to be to you beyond the bounds of possibility that you should doubt the truth of the promises of God! And this ought to be more impossible still, if such an expression may be used, to God's own children. You could not make a true-hearted child suspect his father of falsehood. If he heard such an accusation brought against a loving and kind father he would be indignant. He would not want to hear rebutting evidence, he would say, "It is impossible. I know my father. I know his character. I have seen him. I understand him. I cannot endure to hear him slandered and I do not need to hear him defended, for of this I am sure that he cannot lie." In the child's case, there might be a partiality and the father might have been guilty. But in the case of the children of God, no such possibility exists, for our Father is the God of truth. Oh, my brethren, shall it ever be said that the children of God doubt their Father? I have heard some professing Christians say that they find it hard to believe His promises and yet they do not appear to think that they have said a dreadful thing—yet a very dreadful thing it is. What must be their opinion of God if they find it hard to believe Him? Think of it again—a child of God finding it hard to believe his own Father—his heavenly Father! Ah, wretched sin! Wretched insult to God! If *we* were not so false-hearted ourselves we should never dream of the Lord's being so and if we were not conscious of being chargeable with un-

truth, the thought that perchance God might fail to fulfill His word would never be tolerated. It is horrible! If it has crossed your mind, scout it and with many tears confess it before God, for to a child of God it ought to be impossible to doubt His Father's truthfulness.

To some children of God that impossibility ought to be still more striking because certain of us have received special and infallible proofs of the Lord's faithfulness to His promises. He has answered the prayers of some of us in a way that has drowned our eyes with tears of joy. He has made us laugh like Sarah when the child of promise was given to her. We have felt amazed at the mighty goodness of our God and for us to doubt now should be impossible. We ought to settle it in our minds that, come what may, though the earth were removed and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea—though everything should alter and the laws of nature should be changed and day and night forget their time—yet would we never suppose, nor allow others to suppose, that God could be false to His promises and break His word. I am resolved and my brethren, you will join with me in it and may God give us grace to carry it out—to doubt the evidence of my eyes, but not to doubt God—for our eyes have often deceived us, but Jehovah never. Light may play tricks with these poor optics, but the Lord has never spoken to mock us, nor said what He cannot perform. Resolve, my brethren, to doubt your ears and deny your hearing sooner than doubt your God, for sounds are often imaginary and ears are speedily duped. Resolve to doubt your most deliberate judgment rather than one word of the Lord. How often have you been mistaken! Even when according to mathematical calculations it seems as certain as that twice two make four that God cannot execute His word, deny the mathematics but never doubt God. There is nothing certain under heaven but God. Uncertainty is upon all things but upon His word. If you consult with friends and in their judgment they all unanimously conclude that the case is hopeless and that the promise cannot be fulfilled, reject them all and refuse to consult with flesh and blood. Let God be true and every man a liar. Yes, and every*thing* a liar. Doubt as much as you please your own feelings, it is seldom that they are to be relied upon. Mistrust, as I have already said, your own senses—they are but very fallible reporters of fact, but never distrust your God. If devils, or even angels, could stand in squadrons and swear unanimously that God had failed, call them liars too, for God cannot, cannot, cannot lie. The things which are seen are, after all, but mere shadows and dependent for their appearing and continuing upon the Lord, alone. Why, then, confide in them at the expense of your confidence in God? God only is true and when you have no hope but in Him alone, you have all the hope worth having. They say of us who trust in God alone that we have nothing to look to. Our answer is that faith in the unseen God is the highest reason and is grounded on the surest fact. His unseen arm is stronger than all that angel or human eye can ever see and there is more potency in God, who is neither to be heard nor seen, than in all the crash of whirlwinds or the glare of tempests. There is no power but in Him and therefore no certainty of infallible truth but in the word which He has spoken.

Look, sirs, every promise in God's Word comes to you, first, from the Father's lip—will you doubt Him? It next comes by the Holy Spirit, who reveals it—will you doubt Him? Beware lest you sin against the Holy Spirit. It comes next sealed with the blood of Jesus. Will you doubt Him? Will you suspect your Savior? A single doubt of a promise of God casts a stigma upon Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and is a triple transgression against the triune God. O the venom that lies in a single suspicion of the Most High!

It is strange how you and I can enter into confidence and conviction about many things and yet we cannot exercise the same confidence towards our God. You all believe in the laws of matter. You expect that the law of gravitation will bring a weight downward if you throw it from the window—why are you so certain? Because you have seen the rule in action so often that you now expect to see it carried out—and yet the law of gravitation might be suspended. Indeed, it has been suspended, for at the Red Sea the floods stood upright as a heap and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. You all expect the sun to rise in the morning and to set at his appointed time because he has kept his daily marches for many years. And yet there was a time when there was no sun to rise or set and there will be a time when the sun shall be turned into darkness and day and night shall cease. Can you trust the temporary and yet doubt the eternal? You all expect the seasons of the year to come and go, but they might be reversed by God right easily. Now, if we can believe in the laws of nature, which are evidently changeable and which will one day certainly come to an end, how is it that we cannot believe in God whose regularity in the keeping of His promises has been as great as the regularity of day and night, of seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, and whose permanent immutability will run on throughout eternity? O that we were wise! O that we were commonly honest with God and spoke of Him as we have found Him! Then we should doubt Him no more, but abide in fixed and steadfast confidence. O Holy Spirit, work us to this end!

III. This brings me, in the third place, to dwell upon this sin very much in the same way, only with this heading, the sin bitterly DEPLORED. We have all been guilty of it. Some here are living constantly in the commission of it. But what I need to call to your remembrance is this, that in any one case of doubting the truthfulness of God there is the full venom of the entire sin of unbelief. That is to say, if you distrust the Lord in one, you doubt Him altogether. You say that you can believe the Lord about other things, but there is one particular point which staggers you. But is it not clear that the man who is convicted of one falsehood is no longer trustworthy? The Scripture calls Him, "God who cannot lie." Do you think He can lie once, then He can lie and the Scripture is broken. "Ah, but I mean He may not keep His promise *to me.* I am such an unworthy person." Yes, but when a man forfeits his word, it is no defense for him to say, "I told an untruth, but it was only to an unworthy person." No, the truth must be spoken irrespective of persons. I have no right to deceive even a criminal. Do you dare say that to one person the Lord can be untrue? If it can be so, He is not a true God any more. It on-

ly needs one falsehood, one breach of promise, one lie to be proved, and you have smitten the character of the accused to the very heart—you would not dream of doing such a thing to the great God. You may as well doubt Him about everything if you distrust Him upon any one matter. Get but the promise from God and there is an infallible necessity that He shall keep it, be it a little promise or a great one, for the character of a truthful being is all square and He is false in nothing.

Do you reply that you doubted Him upon a very trivial matter and it was only a little mistrust? Alas, there is a world of iniquity in the faintest discredit of the thrice holy Lord. Reflect, then, with sorrow that we have been guilty of this sin, not once, but a great many times. Timorousness and suspicion spring up in some bosoms like weeds in the furrows. They sing the Lord's praises for a great deliverance just experienced, but the next cloud which darkens the sky fills them with fear and they again mistrust divine love. Their heavenly Father delivers them and helps them and comforts them and they say they will never doubt again, but in a short time another trial looms in the distance and they are despondent and dismayed. Now, I will read to you and I will read to myself these words of God which make up our text, "How long will this people provoke Me? And how long will it be before they believe Me for all the signs which I have showed among them?"

Another thought upon this point and it is this—are there not some professing people of God who do not seem to live a life of faith at all? I mean some who have no faith about their temporal circumstances at all and almost look upon living by faith as if it were a kind of fanaticism which they admit to be very pious and good, but they can never come up to it. Yet faith should be an everyday thing with us. In the life of Abraham, how few acts are mentioned of outward religion, of long retirements, fasts, public services, sacraments, and so forth—but how clear it is that his daily secular and domestic life was a living unto God as a pilgrim and a sojourner with Him. There is no visible line between secular and sacred in the patriarch's life—it was all sacred. It is an evil distinction which says so far is spiritual and so far is secular. My brethren, your whole lives must be spiritual lives. There must be faith in God about your home, your families, and your neighbors. Some look upon faith as a kind of Sunday grace to be laid up in the ark of the covenant with Aaron's rod, but indeed, it is an everyday faculty, a grace for the table, a grace for the cupboard, a grace for the pocket, a grace for the market, a grace for the nursery, and a grace for the sick bed. The life of God's people is not to be lived within the four narrow walls of a meeting house—it is lived wherever they are, for in every place the just shall live by faith. The religion of a Christian is to be the whole of his life and faith is to run through it like a thread through a necklace of coral. We are to believe God as much when He says, "Your bread shall be given you and your water shall be sure," as when He says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Oh, for more household faith, more Saturday faith, more real faith! Let us blush and never cease to blush that we have had so little of it.

IV. Lastly, as we have now deplored this sin, we shall conclude by spending a moment or two in heartily DENOUNCING IT. This sin of unbelief, if there were no other reason for denouncing it, let it be reprobated because *it insults God*. I feel an infinite enmity to unbelief because it so terribly misrepresents and slanders my God. If any man were to say to me, "Your father breaks his word," I would not suffer the accuser to go unanswered and assuredly I cannot be silent when my heavenly Father is thus slandered. Our race fell by believing the old dragon's base charge against God when he said to the woman in his vile serpentine language, "You shall not surely die." He thus gave God the lie. Away with you, you subtle serpent! Away with you! Go and eat the dust that is your predestinated meat, for God cannot speak that which is not true—He is truth itself. How greatly does unbelief dishonor the Lord! What shame it casts upon the splendor of His name! Alas, that there should be going up and down this world creatures denying the existence of their Creator and other beings who admit that there is a God and believe that He has spoken and given promise of good things to come, but treat His word as if it were worthless and unfit to be trusted. Oh, hateful, abominable, loathsome mistrust which dares to treat the Lord as unworthy to be believed.

This is sufficient reason for denouncing it and yet since weaker reasons may perhaps help the stronger, let me mention that we are bound to hate unbelief because *it is the ruin of the great mass of our race*. Why are men lost? All their sins which they have done cannot destroy them if they believe in Jesus, but the damning point is that they will *not* believe in Him. Thus says the Scriptures, "He that believes not is condemned already." Why? "Because he has not believed on the Son of God." God Himself hangs on a tree in human form and bleeds to death bearing the sin of man and yet men turn their backs on this infinite display of love and refuse to believe it, and therefore do they to sink to death and hell. I look upon the myriads now in outer darkness and I ask, "Who slew all these?" The answer is, "They could not enter into heaven because of unbelief—they perished because they would not believe in the testimony of God concerning reconciliation by the blood of His Son." May we not well hate this murderous unbelief?

We may hate it, again, because *it brings so much misery and weakness upon the children of God*. My brethren, if we believed God's promises, we should no longer be bowed down with sorrow, for our sorrow would be turned into joy. We would glory in our infirmities. Yes, we would glory in tribulation also, seeing the good result which the Lord brings forth from them. The man who steadily believes His God is calm, quiet, and strong. If men fail him, his God supports him. Suppose his business fails him—his chief business is to serve his God, and that has not failed. If he is himself sick and racked with pain, he resigns himself to the great Father's chastening hand and patience is given. If health is utterly failing, he leaves himself with God that he may take down his tabernacle curtain by curtain, confident that he will build it again in nobler form. When death approaches, he so fully believes in God that he feels it will be gain to him to pass out of this state of trial into everlasting blessedness at the Lord's right hand, and so he is always happy. How strong such a man

becomes. The weakness which comes of fear and trembling does not touch him. His heart is fixed and therefore he has all his strength under control and can bring it to bear upon the place where it is needed. I do not know whether you have thought of the prowess of Samson. His is a very poor character in many aspects, but yet what a true hero he is when you view him in the light of his faith. It was not that he was physically strong by nature, but that he believed God and strength came upon him. As a believer in God, he trusted that the Lord could make his sinews and muscles strong enough for any task which was allotted him. And so, when the gates of Gaza shut him in, he rose up from his sleep and bowed himself before the huge doors, and with a mighty tug lifted them up. And as the bars were fastened to the posts, he pulled up posts and all and carried the whole away to the top of the hill—not as a feat of Herculean strength—but as an act of faith in God. But now the Philistines are upon him. He is upon a rock and cannot escape. He believes in God and he quails not before the host. There are a thousand of the enemy and he is but one—he looks for a weapon and there is nothing handy for him to fight with but a dried bone which once had made the jaw of an ass. What matters? He trusts in God and not in the weapon. See how the Philistines fly before him, or would do so if they could, for with foot and knee and hand, Samson is upon them and his terrible arm sweeps them down in rows. This great child-man was a terrible believer, and when the divine fury of his faith was upon him, he was altogether irresistible. Odds he never reckoned, nor staggered at the promise through unbelief. It was a grand deed for one man to fling himself upon a thousand. I like him better in such silent daring than even when he cries, "Heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of an ass have I slain a thousand men." Only believe God and you can do anything. If the Lord should bid you shake the world, you could do it by faith. Plucking up sycamore trees by the roots and hurling mountains into the sea are mere sport for faith, which before now has subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire. She has grander things to do than the mere slaying of Philistines, for she wrestles with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places and comes off more than conqueror through Him that loved her.

And yet, my friend, are you hiding in the rear? Are you lying in the background? Are you being nursed and cared for as a babe! Shall it always be so? Will you forever be a mere child? If you do not believe, you will never grow strong, but he that believes comes to the full development of that celestial manhood which is akin to the manhood of the Christ of God in whom we live.

One very shocking point about this unbelief is that *it has hampered the work of Christ in the world*. The Christ that can save is a Christ believed in, but of a Christ who is not believed in it is written, "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." The reason why at this time whole nations lie under popery or heathendom is that the church has not faith enough for their conquest. There is no straitening in God—our limit lies in our own timorous hearts. The first thing to be done is for Zion to believe in God and then the rod of His strength shall go

forth out of her midst and she shall become "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." If the Son of Man should now come on the earth, where would He find faith? Where would He discover a high degree of it? You know what most churches do—there is the regular performance of worship service, the regular preaching of an orthodox sermon as dry as it is orthodox, the regular meeting of a few people for a praying meeting, in which there is no real prayer, and the regular revolution of a spiritual barrel organ, from which all spirituality has long ago been ground out. Nothing comes of this lifeless routine and it was never likely that there could be anything, for out of death, death alone can come. When we begin to preach in faith, believing that men must be saved by the gospel, they will be saved by it. When we go forth to battle, confident that the weapon of the gospel in the hand of God cannot fail, it will not fail. It is want of faith on our part which causes the eternal God to put His right hand into His bosom and keep it there. When once the Holy Spirit has worked a mighty faith in us—and we shall never have it till He does—then will the Lord lay bare His arm and we shall see marvelous things. His own right hand and His holy arm will get Him the victory. The world has never seen since apostolic times what yet shall happen in our own day if we will but believe. If we will but confide in God, our young men shall see visions and our old men shall dream dreams and then shall be poured out upon the Lord's servants and handmaidens of His own Spirit and they shall prophesy. Then will the world wake up and cry, "The old fanaticism has come back. These men are drunk with new wine." It will only be that they speak as the Spirit gives them utterance, for He works mightily where faith is mighty, and He is restrained because of this wretched, wicked, insulting, blasphemous unbelief of ours that will persist in suspecting the Lord.

Forward, brethren. God the Holy Spirit helping you, resolve in your hearts this day that you will doubt all the boasted discoveries of science. You will doubt all the affirmations of the wise. You will doubt all the speculations of great thinkers. You will doubt all your own feelings and all the conclusions drawn from outward circumstances. Yes, and everything that seems to be demonstrable to a certainty, you will doubt. But never, never, never, while eternity shall last, will you suffer the thought to pass your mind that God can ever in the least degree run back from anything that He has spoken or change the word that has gone forth of His lips.

Thus have I spoken for Him. May His Holy Spirit make it powerful on your minds, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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THE TEACHING OF THE FOOT-WASHING
NO. 1499

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 12, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded." John 13:3-5.

IT seems to me that the true text of this enacted sermon of the foot-washing is to be found in the first verse of the chapter, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Our Lord washed the feet of His disciples to show that to the last moment of His communion with them He was full of the deepest and truest love to them and was willing to perform the most menial action for their good. Nor was this all, for we may regard that one condescending act as the pledge and type of His daily kindness towards all His own which are in the world. Those deeds of love, which the foot-washing sets forth, are continuous among us and are the sure tokens of His abiding love to us. Our Lord's affection for His people is not a transient passion. He loved them before the earth was. He continues still to love them and He always will love them when these heavens and this earth shall have passed away. In token of the continuance of His love, He has left on record this washing of His disciples' feet, not because He did it once only, but because it is a type of what He is always doing. Even in His glory, He is caring for His saints with that same condescending love which led Him to wash their feet and He is acting towards them spiritually in the selfsame way.

The love of Christ will assuredly endure all the strain that can ever be put upon it, for at the time when He acted as menial servant to His disciples, His love was enduring and enduring right gloriously, three great trials, any one of which might have broken it had it not been altogether omnipotent. For, first, He was about to go away from them. Much of human love needs the presence of its object for its maintenance. It is, alas, seldom true that "absence makes the heart grow fonder." Jesus was about to depart out of this world to the Father and with the exception of one brief interval, He was no more to walk in the midst of His chosen or sit at table with them. Out of sight, however, they would not be out of mind. Though He was just about to take the last terrible journey of death, yet He forgot them not, but graciously made them see that He would remember them still. If you will remember the style of His going, His thoughtfulness of His friends becomes the more remarkable. He was about to leave them by a cruel and shameful death and according to the common conduct of men, it would not have been amazing if He had sought pity and comfort from his friends—instead of which, He forgot

Himself and all the pain and grief and death which lay before Him, and spent all His time and strength upon the comfort and establishment of His followers. When He knew that the hour was come when He must depart out of the world with unutterable pangs, He still loved His own with an all-absorbing love. There was much in the prospect of His grievous departure which might for a season have diverted His thoughts from them, but they lay so close to the center of His soul that even under such circumstances He washed their feet.

Next, it is to be remembered that our Lord was well aware that one of them had already entertained the idea of betraying Him. There sat one at the table who had held a secret interview with the Pharisees and chief priests and had taken money as a bribe for his Master's blood. You cannot so dissociate a leading disciple from the rest as not to feel that the whole band was thereby disgraced and the Lord might very well have said, "I will discard My apostles, for they have betrayed Me," especially when you recollect that those who did not sell Him or betray Him, nevertheless, all forsook Him and fled—forsook Him when they ought to have rallied round Him and have spoken up for Him at the judgment seat. None of them appeared in answer to the question, "Who shall declare His generation?" Like timid hares, they fled at the first bark of the dogs. It would not have been wonderful, had His been a *human* love, if He had said, "They are unworthy of Me—their confidence dies out when they see My sorrow—they betray Me—they forsake Me, therefore I will let them go and care for them no more." No, but knowing what they were, our Lord took a towel and girded Himself and washed their feet, ay, washed the traitor's feet and gently handled that heel which had been lifted up against Him—washing from it the dust gathered in its secret walk upon the traitor's errand.—

"The sight might kings themselves convert,
God only could so far submit:
Satan is in the traitor's heart,
The Lord Most High is at his feet."

This act of tender, considerate affection, performed under such circumstances, to men who acted towards Him in such ungenerous style, proves to us that His love will bear the strain of our ill behavior, our want of fidelity, and our thousand grievous failures. Having loved His own, which are in the world, He loves them to the end.

There was a third strain and a powerful one, too. Our Savior knew that the Father had committed all things into His hands. He knew that there was but a brief interval before He should die and then He would ascend to the Father's right hand and sit there eternally as God over all, blessed forevermore. Yet He did not disdain to do a slave's work for His beloved ones. Oftentimes circumstances alter affections. A man grows rich and great and forgets his friends. This we would not suspect of Jesus if His had not been a greater change than we mortals can possibly experience. But His was a surpassing accession of glory—from being plunged in disgrace and shame, He was exalted to receive the homage of angels and the adoration of the whole universe. One would think that in the prospect of such honors, though He loved His own, He would not so love them as to become their servitor and all in disarray, stoop down before them, even to their feet, and do the service of a bondsman. No won-

der that Peter raised an objection suggested by reverential awe. Who could, without protest, receive such humble service from such hands? Yet our Lord did this with heaven's supernal glory descending on Him. He disrobed Himself, though angels longed to cast the imperial purple about His shoulders. With all things in His hand, He yet took a towel and wiped the disciples' feet.

Beloved, if our Lord's love bore these three strains, we may, like the apostle, be 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. I invite you now, therefore, to see your Savior's enduring and continuing love as set forth to us in this symbolic washing of His disciples' feet and in similar acts of which it is an emblem. I shall ask you to view it, first, as *the type of His continuous* love. And secondly, *as the example of that love as it should be reflected by His people*. May the Holy Spirit be our interpreter and open to us this choice cabinet of love tokens.

I. First we will look upon this washing of the disciples' feet as THE TYPE OF OUR LORD'S CONTINUOUS LOVE TO US. We will view it in four lights. First, *Christ Jesus still acts as the host of His people*. Has it never struck you how much the life of Christ with His people lay in intense familiarity with them? How in common things He displayed His brotherhood with them? He began His ministry at a feast at Cana of Galilee, working His first miracle at a wedding. Again and again we find Him eating with His disciples. The last thing He did was to sit at supper with them and He still says to His church, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man open to Me I will enter in and sup with Him and he with Me." His own figure for the opening of the new dispensation is a supper, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread at the marriage supper of the Lamb." We do not always view our communion with Christ in this homely light and I fear we forget that the acquaintance of Christ with His people was one of great intimacy and familiar communion, for they did eat and drink with Him and He with them. At this time also, Jesus is the host of His church, providing the gospel supper and entertaining us right royally. Instead of meat, He gives us His flesh to eat, rarest of dainties, and He cries, "My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed." He prepares a table before us in the presence of our enemies. He satisfies our mouth with good things so that our youth is renewed like the eagles. And mark you, the Lord is a host who goes through with His divine hospitalities and leaves nothing incomplete. In the East, the master of the house would wash his guests' feet if they were persons whom he sought to honor. You remember how Abraham bade the angels turn into his tent and also said to them, "Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched and wash your feet." Even so our Master entertains us at His table, not as paupers, but as guests, ay, and not as guests of an ordinary kind, but as friends of the highest class, dear to His soul, whose feet He will wash. He can truly say of us, "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable and I have loved you." He treats us as distinguished persons who shall not sit among mean men, but shall have their portion among princes. This foot-washing once done was a fair representation of that

honorable entertainment which the King extends to all believing souls when He bids them come to His banqueting table and drink of the wine which He has mingled. I like to think of the Lord as my host and of myself as no mere waif and stray, but as a welcome guest to whom He is daily fulfilling all a host's part, granting me all I want, yes, all that I wish for. He Himself gives us honors and comforts more than could be expected even from our most familiar friend. See He even washes our feet! What better token need we of His abiding love? Since He continues to entertain His whole church and treats us all as distinguished visitors, it is clear that He loves us still.

My second rendering of the passage is that *He cares for our minor matters with a personal interest*. Jesus washed their feet and this showed a very tender and familiar consideration of their little wants. That He should ease their weary hearts, I can understand. That He should enlighten their clouded brains, I can understand. But that He should wash their feet is wonderful. A little soil on their ankles—will He attend to that? Ay, that He will, and personally too. He will Himself take the basin and the towel and wash their feet. Had they been diseased with leprosy it would seem natural that He should touch them and say, "Be clean." Or had they been blind or crippled, it would have been probable that He would touch their eyes or heal their limbs, but a mere defilement of their feet is so a small a matter. Would He attend to that? He might have left them to wash one another's feet, might He not? Surely He had but to suggest it and they would have cheerfully waited on each other. Peter, at any rate, would have been first to obey and to his Lord's command he would have replied, "Wash them? That I will, with delight." But no. The Lord laid aside His own garments and took a towel and He performed the kindly deed for them. Brothers and sisters, take your little things to Christ. Those trials of which your heart says, "They are too small. Though they prick me like thorns in the flesh and give me pain, yet they are really too trifling for me to mention in prayer." Not so. The Lord loves us to trust Him thoroughly. This is a token of His love, of His continued affection, that even to the little things He will look—even to your smallest affairs He will condescend and you may ask Him. Oh, it is bold asking, but you may do it. You may ask Him to wash your feet, for He will do even that. Do not, I pray you, cause your own love to be put under suspicion through a deficiency in your childlike confidence in your condescending Lord. I confess I have often required more faith to pray about some tiny matter of my own than about a thousand things which concern my Master's Kingdom. And yet when faith is broad and large, love knows that all matters which grieve the minds of His servants touch the heart of the Master and that all which works our good, works also His delight. We must believe in Him so much that we can trust each day's cares with Him, believing that He still washes His disciples' feet by attending to their minor needs and griefs—

"He overrules all mortal things,
And manages our mean affairs.
On humble souls the King of kings
Bestows His counsels and His cares."

We will now take a third reading of it. This washing of the disciples' feet means that *He provides refreshment for His people*. I do not suppose

that many here present know what an intense pleasure it is in extremely hot countries to have the feet washed upon coming in after a weary walk. The servant pours forth fresh cool water from a pitcher upon the feet when they are aching with a long journey and hot with burning heat and dust. The result is delightfully refreshing. Our Lord washed His disciples' feet, not only because cleansing was desirable, but also for their pleasure and solace. He takes great pleasure in giving joy to His followers. He desires that His joy should be in us that our joy may be full. He does not want us to be like paupers who have to be content with bare necessaries, but to be gentlemen-commoners upon His bounty who shall be served right royally, like princes of the blood whom even the King Himself does not disdain to wait upon.

When does the Lord give us these refreshments? He often does this after a journey—I mean after a severe trial. When, as pilgrims to heaven, we have been wearied by the greatness of the way, the Master comes and manifests Himself to us and refreshes us. Sometimes, also, this good cheer comes before the trial, for these disciples were now about to enter upon a very rough road—they were doomed to travel through the rest of their lives without the personal presence of their Master and He seems to say, "Before you set out I will wash your feet. A little refreshment of this kind will strengthen you at the starting, and when you are further on your way, the very remembrance of it will come to you like a cool stream of water fresh from the pitcher." So the Master was pleased to refresh them after a journey and before a journey and the refreshment was intended, as I have already said, for their souls' delight. It was a feast at which they sat and He wished them to enjoy everything that could make them happy at His table. Brethren, I have told you that this foot-washing is a type of our Lord's continuous love to us, a type which is followed by action like itself and so it is in this respect, for He is often refreshing us. Have you not tasted of His cordials? We speak far less of our spiritual delights than we might do, but if we would open our mouths, we could tell of rapturous times, when, though weary and cast down, we have been graciously revived. Sweet promises have been applied to us by our Lord's own hands—like cold water poured upon hot and weary feet—and by this means we have been bathed in rest. A sense of His love has come over us like a dream and yet we were never more awake in our lives. We have been entranced and yet most sober and calm. Our Lord's love is a dear delight and when we realize it, the bells of heaven seem to be ringing close against our ears and choirs of angels to have come down from glory to make music in our chambers. At such times we often wonder why we were so gladdened, but when the next day an extraordinary trouble sets in, we discover the reason and perceive that we have been well nourished that we may go a forty days' journey in the strength of this meat.

Yes, we have had those refreshments in this house when the Word has been preached or when some joyful hymn has borne us on its wings to heaven. Or best of all, at the communion table. Nor here alone, for in our own quiet chambers and in the night watches, the Lord has refreshed our hearts, for He gives songs in the night. These sweet renewals and uplifting are the tokens that having loved His own, He loves them to the end. This is the foot-washing all over again, for Christ is still busy at His

works of love. Though He lays not aside His garment today, nor comes among us like a servant, yet even from the highest throne in glory, He has ways of executing the same purposes of kindness. Still He gives us inward delight and this joy becomes our strength, making us swift as a young roe to run upon His gracious errands. The weariness which makes the feet heavier is removed by joyful fellowship and so we are washed and refreshed. We who are His ministers need much of this, that we may be as hinds let loose, giving goodly words.

Our fourth view of the text is more full and accurate, namely, that *Christ continues to guard the purity of His church,* for though it was not all His meaning, yet by washing their feet He certainly intended their cleansing, for after He had done it He said, "You are clean: he that is washed is clean every whit." Our Lord watches over the purification of all those who are His own and this is a great joy to us who love His church and are concerned for her honor. To see professors defile themselves is heart-breaking work to loving pastors and our only comfort is that Jesus is quite as jealous of the holiness of His people as ever we can be. Beloved, I live while I see your pure and holy conversation. But when I see impurity, worldliness, and evil among you, it cuts me to the heart, and were it not that I know my Lord is watching over the purity of His people, I would fain lay me down and die. From the occasion which our Lord selected for the foot-washing, it is clear that He would have us seek the special purifying power of His Presence during religious ordinances. I really cannot tell at what point of the evening's proceedings our Lord washed His disciples' feet and if you read the chapter, you will be somewhat puzzled. It is "before the Passover," yet it is said, "supper being ended," which, I suppose, would be better rendered, "supper being in progress," for after the washing our Lord took a sop, dipped it, and gave it to Judas and therefore the supper was not over. Or if one supper may have come to an end, another was just commencing. Was this feast the Passover? Was it the Lord's Supper? Was it the first of the agape or love feasts, in which the early church delighted? Which was it? I do not know and I am not much concerned to know. The Lord Jesus Christ made the Passover melt into the Lord's Supper so that you cannot tell where one ends and the other begins. No violent jerk occurred in leaving the lines of the Jewish dispensation for the Christian—for our Lord's disciples went up to the temple to pray after the veil was torn in two and the legal ceremonies had lost their meaning. There was a gradual sliding of the one economy into the other and on the memorable night of the washing of the feet, I suspect that our Master ate and drank with His disciples at a common meal just as the early Christians did when they met together at their love feasts—then probably followed the actual Passover celebration, a night before its time—and this gradually dissolved into the Lord's Supper of which the cup was "the cup after supper." Anyhow, it does not matter much, but it is clear that we need our feet washed before we come to His table, "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of this bread." We also need our feet washed while we are at His table, for there is sin in our holiest things and even when we come most near to our Lord, we need that He wash us according to that text, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the

blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Even when we walk in the light and have clearest fellowship with God, the Lord Jesus continues to cleanse us from all sin. And I am sure we need washing after supper. When we come away from worship, we have need to get alone and cry, "Cleanse me from secret faults. Let my want of devotion or my coldness in it be forgiven. Let my lack of zeal, my scantiness of faith, and the wandering of my heart be all washed away by You, my Lord and Master, for I much need it."

Our Lord is so anxious for the purification of His people that He is frequently giving them a sweet sense that their transgressions in holy things are put away and thus He seems to say to them, "I have accepted your sacrifice. I have received your prayers and tears and presented them unto My Father. I have washed you and you are clean. Go in peace." This is one of the acts of His continuous love, this daily washing of our feet.

This frequent washing by our Lord we must all have —it is *absolutely necessary*. There is a "must" in the case—as we must be born again, so we must be made holy. It would be to our Lord's dishonor to be followed by disciples who do not walk in integrity and uprightness. As He is Himself perfectly holy, He desires to have around Him a holy people purged from all defilement. He is so anxious that He should have such a people that, sooner than they shall not be washed, He will act the part of a servant and wash their feet Himself. "Be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." You that follow in His footsteps, walk with clean feet. Come not up with the miry clay still sticking to you, but wash, wash daily, and follow your pure Master with pure and cleansed hearts, with careful and obedient feet, so that all may see that you are the disciples of the Undefiled. His ministers especially need this or the people will never cry, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings." Brethren, pray for us that we may experience this to the highest degree.

These constant washings which are the testimony of Christ's continued love we must all receive. Did He not say to Peter, "If I wash you not, you have no part with Me"? If Jesus does not make you holy, you are not His. Brother, if you live in sin and love it, you cannot love God. Unless He truly purges your life and makes you to walk in a clean path, you are not His, for He purges His own—such as riot in iniquity prove that they are of their father, the devil, for his works they do. Whom Jesus loves He purifies. He loved His church and gave Himself for it that He might sanctify and cleanse it. If, then, you are unholy, ungracious, dishonest, unrighteous—how can you say that you belong to His church? He washes the feet of all who are His disciples and if your feet are filthy, you belong not to the faithful band.

This washing must be spiritual—no external form will suffice. Christ washed the feet of Judas with water, but inasmuch as Judas had never been bathed in the laver of regeneration and had never been purged in the fountain of forgiving love, that washing which Christ gave to his feet did him no spiritual good. And you, my friend, may use what external ablutions you will and perform whatever religious ceremonies you please, but unless your spirit has been renewed by the Holy Spirit and your

heart purged in the sight of God, you still have no part nor lot with Christ's disciples.

The mercy is that this purification, which is so necessary and which must be of a spiritual kind, is *very readily given*. I admire the beauty of the figure in its simple ease. The Scripture does not say that our Master was nailed to the cross and poured forth a stream from His heart, in order to wash His disciples' feet. No, although the act by which He cleansed them was very condescending, yet it was not painful or laborious. He laid aside His garments, girded on the towel, and took the pitcher and straightway proceeds to wash the disciples' feet. It was easily done and whatever there was upon the feet was soon removed—it needed no suffering, no dire grief on Jesus' part. For our first washing from the guilt and condemnation of sin it needed that Jesus should lay down His life and fill the cleansing fountain with atoning blood. But for the later removal of sin, the Lord uses an easy process of love. He does by His Spirit speedily cleanse us from iniquity, even as our feet are soon washed. How readily, therefore, we ought to go to Christ about the purging of our consciences from dead works. I have heard it said that the sinner finds great difficulty in going to Christ at first—that is sadly true—but I have also noticed that sometimes there is a difficulty in continuing to go to Him every day of our lives. To go as a sinner and get washed from sin needs faith, but it also requires a steady confidence to resort to Jesus under a thousand conscious failures and backsliding year after year. I sit down in my chamber and I feel I am a forgiven man—about that I am quite sure and therefore I shall never be cast into hell. But this day I spoke unadvisedly with my lips, or I grew angry, or I am conscious that I was proud, or I have been frivolous and worldly, or I have been selfish—and at the remembrance of those sins I lose my peace and feel I cannot pray. Communion with God seems gone while these faults stare me in the face. The arch-enemy whispers, "You cannot get back into your former happy state." At such times let us say to him, "O you enemy, I can and will return into fellowship, for my dear Lord and Master has only to take the basin and wash my feet and this He can do right speedily." O my brother, when a sense of sin revives upon the conscience, do not be persuaded by unbelief that there is an impossibility of escaping it, but go straight away to your Master and say, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," and He will cleanse you and once again you shall joy and rejoice in Him. Remember the words of our hymn concerning the fountain of divine grace—

"This fountain from guilt not only makes pure,
And gives, soon as felt, an infallible cure.
But if guilt removed return and remains,
Its power may be proved again and again."

Mark, however, that this *washing must be given us by our Lord Himself*. He must first wash our feet before we can wash one another's feet. I think I see the Well-Beloved now, as He pours the pure water on their ankles! Mark how He takes their feet into His kind and tender hands and washes them clean, and then He wipes them with the towel! He continues to do this to us even now in a spiritual sense. It is His own dear love that takes away sin from the conscience so that it does not linger there to foul and mar it. Often I think He seems to kiss those feet and say, "Dear child, you are clean now. Watch your footsteps and keep your garments

that they be not defiled again. Yet even if they are, I will wash them again, for I live still to cleanse you and put away your transgressions. I mean before long to make you as perfect as Myself, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." Nor may I leave this point till I bid you mark the condescension of this personal washing, for Abraham did not, himself, wash the angels' feet, but said, "Let a little water be fetched and wash your feet." And Joseph did not personally wash his brother's feet, but the steward of his house brought them in and gave them water and they washed their feet. But Jesus does it all Himself. O my soul, bow down before Him and adore His unparalleled love.

Thus I have shown you that this foot-washing is a symbol of our Redeemer's continuous acts of love. Jesus is always our host and therefore He washes our feet. He always cares for our little matters and in this sense washes even our feet. He is always providing refreshments for His people in their pilgrimage to heaven and thus He washes their feet. He is always guarding the purity of His church and people and so, in the fullest sense He washes their feet.

II. Secondly, we come to practical matters as to ourselves. AS THE MODEL OF HIS OWN LOVE IN HIS PEOPLE, our Lord washed their feet. The love of the saints is their Lord's love in them, which has filled their vessels to the brim and is now running over. Christ's love is the sun and our love is the moonlight which we are able to give forth because the sun has looked upon us. Love is first freely imparted and then plenteously diffused. Jesus says, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water." And then again, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." What we receive, we impart and the grace which works in us at the first, ere long works *by* us.

Let us look at this foot-washing in reference to ourselves and our duty and office in the midst of our brethren. We learn, first, that *there will always be need of service in the church* and always need of service in the particular direction of promoting purity. The apostles were twelve strong men, surely they did not require a servant! Yes, they did. They must have a servant. They could not do without a servant and therefore their Lord supplied the vacant place. And now that the Lord is gone, His church still needs servants and servants to wash feet, or else all will go amiss. On earth the church will never be so clean that it will have no need of foot-washing. The church will never be able to dispense with purifying service till the Lord shall come. You, my brother Christian, may never expect to join a church where there will be nothing for you to do—do not even desire such a position of idleness. We shall never get among a community so pure that we shall see no faults in our brethren and never shall we ourselves be so good that they will see no faults in us. Therefore, let us render and receive a happy, mutual service in the church by which the sanctification of one and all will be promoted. In those words, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet," our Lord speaks as though He would have us reckon upon acting as servants for the benefit of each other. Let us cheerfully accept the position.

We see, next, that *we are not to advocate the abrogation of such service*, or pretend that we have reached a point at which we can dispense

with it. The stoic would say, "Washing feet! What is the good of it? What need of washing a man's feet? If he needs it, let him wash them himself. The first law of nature is self-love—let every man see to it himself. What have I to do with my brother's feet? Let him wash his own. What has he to do with my feet? Let him mind his own business." That is anti-Christianity, but Christianity says, "I am willing that others should help me to be holy and I am also willing to help others to the same end. I am so imperfect that I am willing that anybody should point out my faults and rebuke me for them. And I am so anxious that my brother should be holy that I will lovingly help him to conquer sin." Sometimes it is more humbling to have your own feet washed than to wash other people's and hence sometimes our naughty pride says, "You shall never wash my feet." Yet it must be so and pride must sit still like a child and be both washed and wiped. Again, I perceive that to many it is easy to stoop to the poor, but hard to yield to their equals in estate or in ability. I know those who will do a thousand things for a poor man, but they would not do the like service to those of their own rank. You say, "As for that poor soul, I do not mind conceding many points to him, but this other man will crow over me if I yield to his weakness and he will expect me to do it again, and so I may be thought to be a person of no spirit who can easily be put upon and made a general hack." That also is the speech of anti-Christianity. True Christianity impels us to render and to accept that service which is mutual among true saints. He who kindly reminds me of my faults helps me to be better—let me not be angry with him, but value him for his faithfulness. On the other hand, I must never hint at a failing in a brother unless I believe that he will be the better for it and even then I must do it gently, for I am not to scald my brethren's feet, but to use cool, sparkling, living water in the washing of them. Refining by fire is God's work—refreshing with water is ours. We are to rebuke in love, not in wrath. We are to wipe as well as wet, to comfort as well as correct.

In the world, they criticize—that is the business of the public press and it is very much the business of private circles. Hear how gossips say, "Do you see that spot? What a terrible walk that man must have had this morning—look at his feet! He has been very much in the mire, as you can see, for there are the traces upon him." That is the world's way. Christ's way is very different. He says nothing, but takes the basin and begins to wash away the stain. Do not judge and condemn, but seek the restoration and the improvement of the erring. Say to your faulty brother, "I am very anxious if I may take away your spots. I would not wish to point them out if I did not feel that I should thereby help you to get rid of them." I fear that many professors follow the world's way and indulge in what we call gossip, which is usually slander and misrepresentation or in other words, lying. The best of men may have to endure this, but it is a great pity it should be so. Why will people find pleasure in throwing dirty water over their neighbors? Do you make yourself any better by blackening others? Do you expect to rise by pulling others down? Scorn such attempts. An ambition which suggests such evil means is only worthy of a fiend. O you who truly love your Lord, cease from cruel witticisms and spend your strength in humble and loving washings of your brethren's feet and so shall we all become happier, because more like our Lord.

This foot-washing among disciples *should be done very cheerfully*. Nobody asked the Master to bring the basin—no one would have thought of such a thing. It was His own heart of love that made Him do it, out of spontaneous affection for those whom He had chosen. Let us also be ready to perform any office for our brethren, however lowly. If there is a position in the church where the worker will have to toil hard and get no thanks for it, take it and be pleased with it. If you can perform a service which few will ever seek to do themselves or appreciate when performed by others, yet occupy it with holy delight. Covet humble work and when you get it, be content to continue in it. There is no great rush after the lowest places—you will rob no one by seeking them. The first place we must have an election for and poll the whole community, but for the very lowest there is no great ambition—therefore select such a place and while you will escape envy, you will also gain a quiet conscience. If we were Christ's more thoroughly, we should cheerfully and voluntarily push ourselves into the places of self-sacrifice, counting it our chief honor to serve God and the church in ways which are obscure and despised, because in so doing we shall be saved from the pharisaic spirit which desires the praise of man.

When we do anything for Christ's people, not only should we do it cheerfully, but thoroughly. How well our Lord took up the servant's place. He disrobed Himself until He stood prepared for His task in much the same undress as an attendant at the Turkish baths who takes off all his upper garments. Our Lord was ready to do His work. He put off all that would hinder Him, for He meant real washing and not a mere form. When you are going to serve your brethren, do it heartily. Give your Lord zealous and earnest service. Strip to your shirt sleeves, if need be, to serve Christ and His people. Do not attempt to play the fine gentleman—is it not far nobler to be a real Christian?

Observe how each point of our Lord's procedure is marked by the evangelist. "He rose from supper and laid aside His garments; and took a towel and girded Himself. After that He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded." He might have left them to wipe themselves, but no, He must finish His love work. "He wiped them with the towel with which He was girded." Whenever you serve a brother or sister for Christ's sake, do it thoroughly. Begin it heartily, go on with it steadfastly, and do not leave off till the deed is done. If anything is to be done slovenly, let it be something which is done for you, but Jesus and His people must have the best which our ability can render. Give the saints of God the pick and choice of your productions—if you wash their feet, wash them well. The foot of the meanest servant of Christ is more honorable than the head of the greatest emperor that ever wore a diadem. It will be seen in eternity to be a greater honor to have performed the most menial service for a true child of God than to have been honored and decorated with stars and garters in the service of the mightiest monarch. Lay yourselves out for thorough service of your Lord in His people and try to be always doing this.

I feel quite sure of my ground in having said that this foot-washing was meant to be a type of what our Lord is always doing, because He

puts it thus, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet." Evidently the inference would be, "If I did this but once, you ought to wash one another's feet once." But since the moral is, "You ought always to wash one another's feet," the doctrine is that in effect our Lord is always washing the feet of His people. Let us carry out the lesson and be always in a servant's attitude among our fellow disciples. Let us always be on bended knee with the basin and the towel near at hand. Let us always be willing to relieve those who are in need, to restore those who stumble, to reclaim those who wander, and to edify and perfect all the body of Christ as far as our ability will permit. Be it ours to promote the holiness of our entire fellow Christians at all times. You say it is the pastor's business to look after the church. I know it is, but the true pastor's wisdom is to set the members of the church looking after one another. "Bear you one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." In my own case, the pastorate of one person over five thousand members is ridiculous, unless it is exercised by impressing all the members with the necessity, the duty, the privilege of mutual oversight—each one seeking to do good to the other according as he has opportunity. Let this mind be in you, which is also in Christ Jesus, who washed His disciples' feet. Love one another, I do implore you, and in honor prefer one another. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let brotherly love continue and ever so live that when your Master looks down upon you He may joy and rejoice in you, as I trust He does this day.

May this, our beloved church, be for many a year a pattern of unity and peace within and of strength and activity without, so that a witness may be borne for pure and undefiled religion and a model set up in which shall be seen the handiwork of the Spirit who creates love in the hearts of the saints. Little children, love one another. Amen.

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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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"And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."
Numbers 21:9.

THIS discourse, when it shall be printed, will make fifteen hundred of my sermons which have been published regularly week after week. This is certainly a remarkable fact. I do not know of any instance in modern times in which 1,500 sermons have thus followed each other from the press from one person and have continued to command a large circle of readers. I desire to utter most hearty thanksgivings to God for divine help in thinking out and uttering these sermons, sermons which have not merely been printed, but have been read with eagerness and have also been translated into foreign tongues. These sermons are publicly being read on this very Sabbath in hundreds of places where a minister cannot be found. These sermons God has blessed to the conversion of multitudes of souls. I may and I must joy and rejoice in this great blessing which I most heartily ascribe to the undeserved favor of the Lord.

I thought the best way in which I could express my thankfulness would be to preach Jesus Christ again and set Him forth in a sermon in which the simple gospel should be made as clear as a child's alphabet. I hope that in closing the list of fifteen hundred discourses, the Lord will give me a word which will be blessed more than any which have preceded it, to the conversion of those who hear it or read it. May those who sit in darkness, because they do not understand the freeness of salvation and the easy method by which it may be obtained, be brought into the light by discovering the way of peace through believing in Christ Jesus. Forgive this prelude. My thankfulness would not permit me to withhold it.

Concerning our text and the serpent of brass. If you turn to John's gospel, you will notice that its commencement contains a sort of orderly list of types taken from Holy Scripture. It begins with the creation. God said, "Let there be light," and John begins by declaring that Jesus, the eternal Word, is "the true light, which lights every man that comes into the world." Before he closes his first chapter, John has introduced a type supplied by Abel, for when the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world." Nor is the first chapter finished before we are reminded of Jacob's ladder, for we find our Lord declaring to Nathanael, "Hereafter you shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of

Man." By the time we have reached the third chapter, we have come as far as Israel in the wilderness and we read the joyful words, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." We are going to speak of this act of Moses this morning, that we may all of us behold the bronze serpent and find the promise true, "everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon the bronze serpent, shall live." It may be that you who have looked before will derive fresh benefit from looking again, while some who have never turned their eyes in that direction may gaze upon the lifted up Savior and this morning be saved from the burning venom of the serpent, that deadly poison of sin which now lurks in their nature and breeds death to their souls. May the Holy Spirit make the word effectual to that gracious end.

I. I shall invite you to consider the subject, first, by noticing THE PERSON IN MORTAL PERIL for whom the bronze serpent was made and lifted up. Our text says, "It came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."

Let us notice that the fiery serpents, first of all, came among the people because *they had despised God's way and God's bread*. "The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." It was God's way—He had chosen it for them and He had chosen it in wisdom and mercy, but they murmured at it. As an old divine says, "It was lonesome and loathsome," but still, it was God's way and therefore it ought not to have been loathsome—His pillar of fire and cloud went before them and His servants, Moses and Aaron, led them like a flock and they ought to have followed cheerfully. Every step of their previous journey had been rightly ordered and they ought to have been quite sure that this compassing of the land of Edom was rightly ordered, too. But no, they quarreled with God's way and wanted to have their own way. This is one of the great standing follies of men—they cannot be content to wait on the Lord and keep His way, but they prefer a will and way of their own.

The people, also, quarreled with God's food. He gave them the best of the best, for "men did eat angels' food," but they called the manna by a reproachful title, which in the Hebrew has a sound of ridicule about it and even in our translation, conveys the idea of contempt. They said, "Our soul loathes this light bread," as if they thought it unsubstantial and only fit to puff them out because it was easy of digestion and did not breed in them that heat of blood and tendency to disease which a heavier diet would have brought with it. Being discontented with their God, they quarreled with the bread which He set upon their table, though it surpassed any that mortal man has ever eaten before or since. This is another of man's follies—his heart refuses to feed upon God's Word or believe God's truth. He craves for the flesh-meat of carnal reason, the leeks and the garlic of superstitious tradition, and the cucumbers of speculation. He cannot bring his mind down to believe the Word of God or to accept a truth so simple, so fitted to the capacity of a child. Many demand something deeper than the divine, more profound than the infinite, more liberal than free grace. They quarrel with God's way and with God's bread

and hence there comes among them the fiery serpents of evil lusts, pride, and sin. I may be speaking to some who have up to this moment quarreled with the precepts and the doctrines of the Lord and I would affectionately warn them that their disobedience and presumption will lead to sin and misery. Rebels against God are apt to wax worse and worse. The world's fashions and modes of thought lead on to the world's vices and crimes. If we long for the fruits of Egypt, we shall soon feel the serpents of Egypt. The natural consequence of turning against God like serpents is to find serpents waylaying our path. If we forsake the Lord in spirit or in doctrine, temptation will lurk in our path and sin will sting our feet.

I beg you carefully to observe concerning those persons for whom the bronze serpent was specially lifted up that *they had been actually bitten by the serpents*. The Lord sent fiery serpents among them, but it was not the serpents being among them that involved the lifting up of a bronze serpent—it was the serpents having actually poisoned them which led to the provision of a remedy. "It shall come to pass that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live." The only people who looked and derived benefit from the wonderful cure lifted up in the midst of the camp were those who had been stung by the vipers. The common notion is that salvation is for *good* people, salvation is for those who fight against temptation, and salvation is for the spiritually healthy. But how different is God's Word. God's medicine is for the sick and His healing is for the diseased. The grace of God, through the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, is for men who are actually and really guilty. We do not preach a sentimental salvation from fancied guilt, but real and true pardon for actual offenses. I care nothing for sham sinners—you who never did anything wrong, you who are so good in yourselves that you are all right, I leave you—for I am sent to preach Christ to those who are full of sin and worthy of eternal wrath. The serpent of brass was a remedy for those who had been bitten.

What an awful thing it is to be bitten by a serpent! I dare say some of you recollect the case of Gurling, one of the keepers of the reptiles in the Zoological Gardens. It happened in October, 1852, and therefore some of you will remember it. This unhappy man was about to part with a friend who was going to Australia and according to the account of many, he had a few drinks with him. He drank considerable quantities of gin and though he would probably have been in a great passion if anyone had called him drunk, yet reason and common sense had evidently become overpowered. He went back to his post at the gardens in an inebriated state. He had some months before seen an exhibition of snake-charming, and this was on his poor muddled brain. He must emulate the Egyptians and play with serpents. First he took out of its cage a Morocco venom-snake, put it round his neck, twisted it about, and whirled it round about him. Happily for him it did not arouse it so as to bite. The assistant keeper cried out, "For God's sake put the snake back," but the foolish man replied, "I am inspired." Putting back the venom-snake, he exclaimed, "Now for the cobra." This deadly serpent was somewhat torpid with the cold of the previous night and therefore the rash man placed it

in his bosom till it revived and glided downward till its head appeared below the back of his waistcoat. He took it by the body, about a foot from the head, and then seized it lower down with his other hand, intending to hold it by the tail and swing it round his head. He held it for an instant opposite to his face and like a flash of lightning the serpent struck him between the eyes. The blood streamed down his face and he called for help, but his companion fled in horror. And as he told the jury, he did not know how long he was gone, for he was "in a maze." When assistance arrived, Gurling was sitting on a chair, having restored the cobra to its place. He said, "I am a dead man." They put him in a cab and took him to the hospital. First his speech went—he could only point to his poor throat and moan. Then his vision failed him and lastly his hearing. His pulse gradually sank and in one hour from the time at which he had been struck, he was a corpse. There was only a little mark upon the bridge of his nose, but the poison spread over his body and he was a dead man. I tell you that story that you may use it as a parable and learn never to play with sin and also in order to bring vividly before you what it is to be bitten by a serpent. Suppose that Gurling could have been cured by looking at a piece of brass, would it not have been good news for him? There was no remedy for that poor infatuated creature, but there is a remedy for you. For men who have been bitten by the fiery serpents of sin, Jesus Christ is lifted up—not for you only who are as yet playing with the serpent; not for you only who have warmed it in your bosom and felt it creeping over your flesh, but for you who are actually bitten and are mortally wounded. If any man were bitten so that he has become diseased with sin and feels the deadly venom in his blood, it is for him that Jesus is set forth today. Though he may think himself to be an extreme case, it is for such that sovereign grace provides a remedy.

The bite of the serpent was painful. We are told in the text that these serpents were "fiery," which may perhaps refer to their color, but more probably has reference to the burning effects of their venom. It heated and inflamed the blood so that every vein became a boiling river, swollen with anguish. In some men that poison of asps, which we call sin, has inflamed their minds. They are restless, discontented, and full of fear and anguish. They write their own damnation—they are sure that they are lost—they refuse all tidings of hope. You cannot get them to give a cool and sober hearing to the message of grace. Sin works in them such terror that they give themselves over as dead men. They are in their own apprehension, as David says, "free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom God remembers no more." It was for men bitten by the fiery serpents that the bronze serpent was lifted up and it is for men actually envenomed by sin that Jesus is preached. Jesus died for such as are at their wits' end—for such as cannot think straight, for those who are tumbled up and down in their minds, for those who are condemned already—for such was the Son of Man lifted up upon the cross. What a comfortable thing that we are able to tell you this.

The bite of these serpents was, as I have told you, mortal. The Israelites could have no question about that, because in their own presence,

"much people of Israel died." They saw their own friends die of the snakebite and they helped to bury them. They knew why they died and were sure that it was because the venom of the fiery serpents was in their veins. They were left without an excuse for imagining that they could be bitten and yet live. Now, we know that many have perished as the result of sin. We are not in doubt as to what sin will do, for we are told by the infallible Word that, "The wages of sin is death," and yet again, "Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death." We know, also, that this death is endless misery, for the Scripture describes the lost as being cast into outer darkness, "where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched." Our Lord Jesus speaks of the condemned going away into everlasting punishment, where there shall be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. We ought to have no doubt about this, and the most of those who profess to doubt it are those who fear that it will be their own portion, who know that they are going down to eternal woe themselves and therefore try to shut their eyes to their inevitable doom. Alas, that they should find flatterers in the pulpit who pander to their love of sin by piping to the same tune. We are not of their order. We believe in what the Lord has said in all its solemnity of dread and knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men to escape therefrom. But it was for men who had endured the mortal bite, for men upon whose pallid faces death began to set his seal, for men whose veins were burning with the awful poison of the serpent within them—for them it was that God said to Moses, "Make you a fiery serpent and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live."

There is no limit set to the stage of poisoning. However far gone, the remedy still had power. If a person had been bitten a moment before, though he only saw a few drops of blood oozing forth and only felt a little smart, he might look and live. And if he had waited, unhappily waited, even for half an hour and speech failed him and the pulse grew feeble, yet if he could but look he would live at once. No boundary was set to the virtue of this divinely ordained remedy or to the freedom of its application to those who needed it. The promise had no qualifying clause, "It shall come to pass that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live." And our text tells us that God's promise came to pass in every case, without exception, for we read, "It came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." Thus I have described the person who was in mortal peril.

II. Secondly, let us consider THE REMEDY PROVIDED FOR HIM. This was as singular as it was effectual. *It was purely of divine origin* and it is clear that the invention of it and the putting of power into it was entirely of God. Men have prescribed several medicines, decoctions, and operations for serpent bites—I do not know how far any of them may be depended upon, but this I know—I would rather not be bitten in order to try any of them, even those that are most in vogue. For the bites of the fiery serpents in the wilderness there was no remedy whatever, except this which God had provided and at first sight, that remedy must have seemed to be a very unlikely one. A simple look to the figure of a serpent

on a pole how unlikely to avail! How and by what means could a cure be worked through merely looking at twisted brass? It seemed indeed to be almost a mockery to bid men look at the very thing which had caused their misery. Shall the bite of a serpent be cured by looking at a serpent? Shall that which brings death also bring life? But herein lay the excellency of the remedy, that it was of divine origin—for when God ordains a cure, He is by that very fact bound to put potency into it. He will not devise a failure, nor prescribe a mockery. It should always be enough for us to know that God ordains a way of blessing us, for if He ordains, it must accomplish the promised result. We need not know how it will work, it is quite sufficient for us that God's mighty grace is pledged to make it bring forth good to our souls.

This particular remedy of a serpent lifted on a pole was exceedingly instructive, though I do not suppose that Israel understood it. We have been taught by our Lord and know the meaning. It was a serpent impaled upon a pole. As you would take a sharp pole and drive it through a serpent's head to kill it, so this bronze serpent was exhibited as killed and hung up as dead before all eyes. It was the image of a dead snake. Wonder of wonders that our Lord Jesus should condescend to be symbolized by a dead serpent. The instruction to us, after reading John's gospel, is this—our Lord Jesus Christ, in infinite humiliation, deigned to come into the world and to be made a curse for us. The bronze serpent had no venom of itself, but it took the form of a fiery serpent. Christ is no sinner and in Him is no sin. But the bronze serpent was in the form of a serpent and so was Jesus sent forth by God, "in the likeness of sinful flesh." He came under the law and sin was imputed to Him and therefore He came under the wrath and curse of God for our sakes. In Christ Jesus, if you will look at Him upon the cross, you will see that sin is slain and hung up as a dead serpent—there too is death put to death, for "He has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light"—and there is also the curse forever ended because He has endured it, being "made a curse for us, as it is written, cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." Thus are these serpents hung up upon the cross as a spectacle to all beholders, all slain by our dying Lord. Sin, death, and the curse are as dead serpents now. Oh, what a sight! If you can see it, what joy it will give you. Had the Hebrews understood it, that dead serpent dangling from a pole would have prophesied to them the glorious sight which this day our faith gazes upon Jesus slain and sin, death, and hell slain in Him. The remedy, then, to be looked to was exceedingly instructive and we know the instruction it was intended to convey to us.

Please to recollect that in all the camp of Israel there was but one *remedy* for a serpent bite and that was the bronze serpent—and there was but one bronze serpent, not two. Israel might not make another. If they had made a second, it would have had no effect. There was one and only one and that was lifted high in the center of the camp, that if any man was bitten by a serpent he might look to it and live. There is one Savior and only one. There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved. All grace is concentrated in Jesus, of whom

we read, "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." Christ's bearing the curse and ending the curse, Christ's being slain by sin and destroying sin, Christ bruised as to His heel by the old serpent, but breaking the serpent's head—it is Christ alone that we must look to if we would live. O sinner, look to Jesus on the cross, for He is the one remedy for all forms of sin's poisoned wounds.

There was but one healing serpent and that one was *bright and lustrou*s. It was a serpent of brass and brass is a shining metal. This was newly-made brass and therefore not dimmed and whenever the sun shone, there flashed forth a brightness from this bronze serpent. It might have been a serpent of wood or of any other metal if God had so ordained, but He commanded that it must be of brass, that it might have brightness about it.

What brightness there is about our Lord Jesus Christ! If we do but exhibit Him in His own true metal, He is lustrous in the eyes of men. If we will but preach the gospel simply and never think to adorn it with our philosophical thought, there is enough brightness in Christ to catch a sinner's eye—ay, and it does catch the eyes of thousands. From afar the everlasting gospel gleams in the person of Christ. As the bronze standard reflected the beams of the sun, so Jesus reflects the love of God to sinners and seeing it, they look by faith and live.

Once more, this remedy was *an enduring one*. It was a serpent of brass and I suppose it remained in the midst of the camp from that day forward. There was no use for it after Israel entered Canaan, but as long as they were in the wilderness, it was probably exhibited in the center of the camp, hard by the tabernacle door, upon a lofty standard. Aloft and open to the gaze of all hung this image of a dead snake—the perpetual cure for serpent venom. Had it been made of other materials it might have been broken or have decayed, but a serpent of brass would last as long as fiery serpents pestered the desert camp. As long as there was a man bitten, there was the serpent of brass to heal him. What a comfort is this, that Jesus is still able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them. The dying thief beheld the brightness of that serpent of brass as he saw Jesus hanging at his side and it saved him. And so may you and I look and live, for He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever."—

"Faint my head, and sick my heart,
Wounded, bruised, in every part.
Satan's fiery sting I feel
Poisoned with the pride of hell.
But if at the point to die,
Upward I direct my eye,
Jesus lifted up I see,
I live by Him who died for me."

I hope I do not overlay my subject by these figures. I wish not to do so, but to make it very plain to you. All you that are really guilty, all you who are bitten by the serpent, the sure remedy for you is to look to Jesus Christ, who took our sin upon Himself and died in the sinner's stead, "being made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God

in Him." Your only remedy lies in Christ and nowhere else. Look unto Him and be you saved.

III. This brings us, in the third place, to consider THE APPLICATION OF THE REMEDY or the link between the serpent-bitten man and the brass serpent which was to heal him. What was the link? It was of the simplest kind imaginable. The bronze serpent might have been, if God had so ordered it, carried into the house where the sick man was, but it was not so. It might have been applied to him by rubbing—he might have been expected to repeat a certain form of prayer or to have a priest present to perform a ceremony, but there was nothing of the kind. He had only to look. It was well that the cure was so simple for the danger was so frequent. Bites of the serpent came in many ways. A man might be gathering sticks or merely walking along and be bitten. Even now in the desert serpents are a danger. Mr. Sibree says that on one occasion he saw what he thought to be a round stone, beautifully marked. He put forth his hand to take it up, when to his horror he discovered that it was a coiled-up living serpent. All the daylong, when fiery serpents were sent among them, the Israelites must have been in danger. In their beds and at their meals; in their houses and when they went abroad, they were in danger. These serpents are called by Isaiah, "flying serpents," not because they fly, but because they contract themselves and then suddenly spring up so as to reach to a considerable height. A man might be well off his and yet not be beyond the reach of one of these malignant reptiles. What was a man to do? He had nothing to do but to stand outside his tent door and look to the place where gleamed afar the brightness of the serpent of brass and the moment he looked, he was healed. He had nothing to do but to look. No priest was wanted, no holy water, no hocus-pocus, no mass-book—nothing but a look. A Romish bishop said to one of the early Reformers, when he preached salvation by simple faith, "O Mr. Doctor, open that gap to the people and we are undone." And so indeed they are, for the business and trade of priestcraft are ended forever if men may simply trust Jesus and live. Yet it is even so. Believe in Him, you sinners—for this is the spiritual meaning of looking—and at once your sin is forgiven. And what perhaps is more, its deadly power ceases to operate within your spirit. There is life in a look at Jesus. Is not this simple enough?

But please notice how *very personal* it was. A man could not be cured by anything anybody else could do for him. If he had been bitten by the serpent and had refused to look to the serpent of brass and had gone to his bed, no physician could help him. A pious mother might kneel down and pray for him, but it would be of no use. Sisters might come in and plead, ministers might be called in to pray that the man might live, but he must die despite their prayers if he did not look. There was only one hope for his life—he must look to that serpent of brass. It is just so with you. Some of you have written to me begging me to pray for you, so I have, but it avails nothing unless you yourselves believe in Jesus Christ. There is not beneath heaven, nor in heaven, any hope for any one of you unless you will believe in Jesus Christ. Whoever you may be, however

much bitten of the serpent and however near to die, if you will look to the Savior you shall live. But if you will not do this, you must be damned, as surely as you live. At the last great day, I must bear witness against you that I have told you this straight out and plainly, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved: he that believes not shall be damned." There is no help for it. You may do what you will, join what church you please, take the Lord's Supper, be baptized, go through severe penance, or give all your goods to feed the poor, but you are a lost man unless you look to Jesus, for this is the one remedy and even Jesus Christ Himself cannot, will not, save you unless you look to Him. There is nothing in His death to save you. There is nothing in His life to save you unless you will trust Him. It has come to this—you must look—and look for yourself.

And then, again, it is *very instructive*. This looking, what did it mean? It meant this—self-help must be abandoned and God must be trusted. The wounded man would say, "I must not sit here and look at my wound, for that will not save me. See there where the serpent struck me? The blood is oozing forth, black with the venom. How it burns and swells! My very heart is failing. But all these reflections will not ease me. I must look away from this to the uplifted serpent of brass." It is idle to look anywhere except to God's one ordained remedy. The Israelites must have understood as much as this, that God required us to trust Him and to use His means of salvation. We must do as He bids us and trust in Him to work our cure, and if we will not do this, we shall die eternally.

This way of curing was intended that they might magnify the love of God and attribute their healing entirely to divine grace. The bronze serpent was not merely a picture, as I have shown you, of God's putting away sin by spending His wrath upon His Son, but it was a display of divine love. And this I know because Jesus Himself said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." He was plainly saying that the death of Christ upon the cross was an exhibition of God's love to men and whosoever looks to that grandest display of God's love to man, namely, His giving His only-begotten Son to become a curse for us, shall surely live. Now, when a man was healed by looking at the serpent, he could not say that he healed himself, for he only looked and there is no virtue in a look. A believer never claims merit or honor on account of his faith. Faith is a self-denying grace and never dares to boast. Where is the great credit of simply believing the truth and humbly trusting Christ to save you? Faith glorifies God and so our Lord has chosen it as the means of our salvation. If a priest had come and touched the bitten man, he might have ascribed some honor to the priest. But when there was no priest in the case, when there was nothing except looking to that bronze serpent, the man was driven to the conclusion that God's love and power had healed him. I am not saved by anything that I have done, but by what the Lord has done. To that conclusion God will have us all come—we must all confess that if saved, it is by His free, rich, sovereign, undeserved grace displayed in the person of His dear Son.

IV. Allow me one moment upon the fourth head, which is THE CURE EFFECTED. We are told in the text that, "If a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." That is to say, he was healed at once. He had not to wait five minutes or five seconds. Dear hearer, did you ever hear this before? If you have not, it may startle you, but it is true. If you have lived in the blackest sin that is possible up to this very moment, yet if you will now believe in Jesus Christ, you shall be saved before the clock ticks another time. It is done like a flash of lightning. Pardon is not a work of time.

Sanctification needs a lifetime, but justification needs no more than a moment. You believe, you live. You trust Christ, your sins are gone. You are a saved man the instant you believe. "Oh," says one, "that is a wonder." It is a wonder and will remain a wonder to all eternity. Our Lord's miracles, when He was on earth, were mostly instantaneous. He touched them and the fevered ones were able to sit up and minister to Him. No doctor can cure a fever in that fashion, for there is a resultant weakness left after the heat of the fever is abated. Jesus works perfect cures and whosoever believes in Him, though he has only believed one minute, is justified from all his sins. Oh the matchless grace of God!

This remedy healed again and again. Very possibly after a man had been healed, he might go back to his work and be attacked by a second serpent, for there were broods of them about. What had he to do? Why, to look again and if he was wounded a thousand times, he must look a thousand times. You, dear child of God, if you have sin on your conscience, look to Jesus. The healthiest way of living where serpents swarm is never to take your eyes off the bronze serpent at all. Ah, you vipers, you may bite if you will, but as long as my eyes are upon the bronze serpent, I defy your fangs and poison, for I have a continual remedy at work within me. Temptation is overcome by the blood of Jesus. "This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith."

This cure was of universal efficacy to all who used it. There was not one case in all the camp of a man that looked to the serpent of brass and yet died. And there never will be a case of a man that looks to Jesus who remains under condemnation. The believer must be saved. Some of the people had to look from a long distance. The pole could not be equally near to everybody, but so long as they could see the serpent it healed those that were afar off as well as those who were nigh. Nor did it matter if their eyes were feeble. All eyes were not alike keen and some may have had to squint or had dimness of vision or only one eye, but if they did but look, they lived. Perhaps the man could hardly make out the shape of the serpent as he looked. "Ah," he said to himself, "I cannot discern the coils of the bronze snake, but I can see the shining of the brass," and he lived. Oh, poor soul, if you cannot see the whole of Christ, nor all His beauties, nor all the riches of His grace, yet if you can but see Him who was made sin for us, you shall live. If you say, "Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief," your faith will save you. A little faith will give you a great Christ and you shall find eternal life in Him.

Thus I have tried to describe the cure. Oh that the Lord would work that cure in every sinner here at this moment. I do pray He may. It is a pleasant thought that if they looked to that bronze serpent by any kind of light they lived. Many beheld it in the glare of noon and saw its shining coils and lived. But I should not wonder that some were bitten at night and by the moonlight they drew near and looked up and lived. Perhaps it was a dark and stormy night and not a star was visible. The tempest crashed overhead and from the murky cloud, out flashed the lightning, cleaving the rocks asunder. By the glare of that sudden flame, the dying man made out the bronze serpent and though he saw but for a moment yet he lived. So, sinner, if your soul is wrapped in tempest and if from out the cloud there comes but one single flash of light, look to Jesus Christ by it and you shall live.

V. I close with this last matter of consideration—here is A LESSON FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THEIR LORD. What ought we to do? We should imitate Moses whose business it was to set the bronze serpent upon a pole. It is your business and mine to lift up the gospel of Christ Jesus so that all may see it. All Moses had to do was to hang up the bronze serpent in the sight of all. He did not say, "Aaron, bring your censer and bring with you a score of priests and make a perfumed cloud." Nor did he say, "I myself will go forth in my robes as lawgiver and stand there." No, he had nothing to do that was pompous or ceremonial. He had but to exhibit the brass serpent and leave it naked and open to the gaze of all. He did not say, "Aaron, bring here a cloth of gold, wrap up the serpent in blue and scarlet and fine linen." Such an act would have been clean contrary to his orders. He was to keep the serpent unveiled. Its power lay in itself and not in its surroundings. The Lord did not tell him to paint the pole or to deck it with the colors of the rainbow. Oh, no. Any pole would do. The dying ones did not need to see the pole, they only needed to behold the serpent. I dare say he would make a neat pole, for God's work should be done decently, but still the serpent was the only thing to look at. This is what we have to do with our Lord. We must preach Him, teach Him, and make Him visible to all. We must not conceal Him by our attempts at eloquence and learning. We must have done with the polished lancewood pole of fine speech and those bits of scarlet and blue in the form of grand sentences and poetic periods. Everything must be done that Christ may be seen and nothing must be allowed which hides Him. Moses may go home and go to bed when the serpent is once lifted up. All that is wanted is that the bronze serpent should be within view both day and night. The preacher may hide himself so that nobody may know who he is, for if he has set forth Christ, he is best out of the way.

Now, you teachers, teach your children Jesus. Show them Christ crucified. Keep Christ before them. You young men that try to preach, do not attempt to do it grandly. The true grandeur of preaching is for Christ to be grandly displayed in it. No other grandeur is needed. Keep self in the background, but set forth Jesus Christ among the people, evidently crucified among them. None but Jesus, none but Jesus. Let Him be the sum and substance of all your teaching.

Some of you have looked to the bronze serpent, I know, and you have been healed, but what have you done with the bronze serpent since? You have not come forward to confess your faith and join the church. You have not spoken to any one about his soul. You put the bronze serpent into a chest and hide it away. Is this right? Bring it out and set it on a pole. Publish Christ and His salvation. He was never meant to be treated as a curiosity in a museum. He is intended to be exhibited in the high-ways that those who are sin-bitten may look at Him. "But I have no proper pole," says one. The best sort of pole to exhibit Christ upon is a high one so that He may be seen the further. Exalt Jesus. Speak well of His name. I do not know any other virtue that there can be in the pole but its height. The more you can speak in your Lord's praise, the higher you can lift Him up, the better. But for all other styles of speech, there is nothing to be said. Do lift Christ up. "Oh," says one, "but I have not a long standard." Then lift Him up on such as you have, for there are short people about who will be able to see by your means. I think I told you once of a picture which I saw of the bronze serpent. I want the Sunday school teachers to listen to this. The artist represented all sorts of people clustering round the pole and as they looked, the horrible snakes dropped off their arms and they lived. There was such a crowd around the pole that a mother could not get near it. She carried a little babe, which a serpent had bitten. You could see the blue marks of the venom. As she could get no nearer, the mother held her child aloft and turned its little head that it might gaze with its infant eyes upon the bronze serpent and live. Do this with your little children, you Sunday school teachers. Even while they are yet little, pray that they may look to Jesus Christ and live, for there is no bound set to their age. Old men, snake-bitten, came hobbling on their crutches. "Eighty years old am I," says one, "but I have looked to the bronze serpent and I am healed." Little boys were brought out by their mothers, though as yet they could hardly speak plainly, and they cried in child language, "I look at the great snake and it blesses me." All ranks and sexes and characters and dispositions looked and lived. Who will look to Jesus at this good hour? O dear souls, will you have life or no? Will you despise Christ and perish? If so, your blood be on your own head. I have told you God's way of salvation. Lay hold on it. Look to Jesus at once. May His Spirit gently lead you to do so. Amen.

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REFUGES OF LIES AND WHAT WILL BECOME OF THEM
NO. 1501

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 26, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place."
Isaiah 28:17.

OVER against amazing mercy, the Holy Spirit sets awakening judgment. The acceptable year of the Lord is also the day of vengeance of our God and the sentence which shall confirm the righteous in his righteousness is attended by another which says, "He that is unjust let him be unjust still." When the Lord shall come to be glorified in His saints, He will at the same time take vengeance in flaming fire upon those that know Him not. In the present instance, in the sixteenth verse of this chapter, the Lord declares, "Behold *I lay* in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone" and then immediately in our text He speaks of another laying, "Judgment also *will I lay* to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." Upon the roses of grace grow the thorns of justice. Whenever the Lord bares His arm for mercy towards believers, He gives a backstroke to His enemies. Hence even the activity of love wears a threatening aspect to those who live impenitent, wedded to their sins, since it is accompanied by an energetic display of justice. Take care that you remember this, you who are unbelievers and yet dream of some millennial benediction or latter day glory which may bring salvation to you. Is it not written, "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness and not light"? Whatever good may be in store for believers, there is none for you. The pillar of fire which will give light to the Lord's Israel will be darkness to you, O you Egyptians. To those who are out of Christ, even the greatest triumphs of divine love will be terrible—they shall behold and wonder and perish—they shall see the plentiful goodness of the Lord but they shall not eat thereof, but die in the gate.

These are heavy tidings for you who love not the Lord, but they are as true as they are heavy—as certainly as mercy lays her foundation, as surely will judgment sweep away those who reject it and build upon another. Nor shall there be long space between the rejection of the blessing and the execution of the curse. Longsuffering will have an end and then the swift-footed executioner shall overtake the sinner and woe shall be unto the hairy scalp of him that goes on in his iniquities. Now therefore, be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong. Another great truth should never be forgotten—it is this—a great privilege involves a great responsibility. It is a great privilege to hear the gospel, but woe unto those

who shut their ears to its warnings and invitations, for it shall ring out their death-knell. It is a very high favor to see the foundation which God has laid in Zion and to be exhorted to build upon it. But of those who reject that foundation, vengeance will be exacted. Upon whomsoever this stone shall fall, it shall grind them to powder. In proportion to the love which gave the Only Begotten to be the foundation of a sinner's hope will be the divine indignation against those who reject Him. You who see Jesus set forth before you as the cornerstone of the Lord's own choosing and yet perversely turn aside to prepare false refuges of your own will have to answer to God for this insult to His Son, this despite to His Spirit. Every hour in which you make lies your refuge and hide yourselves under falsehood, you increase your guilt. O that you would consider this.

But I hear one say, "We have no refuge or hiding place and do not feel that we need any." I answer that this very self-conceit of yours is your refuge. Every man knows in his own conscience that he needs a shelter of some sort to screen himself from stern justice. He supplies his conscience with something in the form of a shield because he inwardly knows that he is not able to appear before God without some sort of apology or attempt at justification. Let him quiet his conscience as much as he pleases, there is a something within him which tells him that everything is not right. He may brag as he likes, but he has at least a suspicion of danger, a fear of coming judgment. Even as a man needs the shelter of a cave, a hut, or a house for his body, so he needs a refuge for his soul and when he rejects the solid refuge which the mercy of God has provided in Christ Jesus, he sets to work to build another shelter and to lay for himself another foundation where he may repose. Our desire this morning is anxiously and solemnly to warn men of what will come of their willfulness and to lead them to look a little before them and spy out, through the telescope of Scripture, the sure future of their ungrounded hopes. Thus I trust they may be led to abandon all false refuges and may be guided by the Spirit of God to accept the sure foundation which God has laid for His believing people. O how I long that you may all of you be right for eternity. I would not have one of you perish, any more than I would wish to perish myself. O Holy Spirit, bless my feeble words to the good of these my beloved people. May my weakness of thought and speech never hinder You from working, but rather, in this hour of my infirmity, speak with greater power.

First, *let us see the Lord judging false refuges.* Secondly, *let us picture their destruction.* And thirdly, *let us take the warning* which such a subject should convey to every thoughtful mind.

I. LET US SEE THE LORD JUDGING MAN'S REFUGES. He says, "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." Observe that, however carelessly we may judge ourselves, God will not so judge us. We may take things at second hand and view them very lightly, but God makes personal observation and takes a careful survey. We may foolishly say, "Do not let us trouble ourselves too much or become too anxious, things will no doubt come right one of these days," but God is in earnest and there is no trifling with Him. Observe that His survey is performed with the utmost accuracy. He will not judge according to the sight of the eyes or the hearing of the ears, but He will go into matters and

make a thorough search. An ordinary builder who should be sent to examine a house would probably content himself with hastily looking to see whether the walls were perpendicular and whether the work was of the quantity and quality specified in the contract. He could tell this pretty nearly with his eye or by measuring with his foot. But if a very careful and scientific survey were wanted, he would then produce his plummet and his line and try everything by the regular accepted tests of builder's work. Hence our text describes the Lord as laying judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet—that is to say, He makes a deliberate trial of our confidences, compares our hopes with our conduct, our beliefs with the truth—and our expectations with the facts of the case. He measures and gauges and gives in an accurate estimate of what we are and where we are. O that we might have grace to invite such a test at once by praying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts." If the Lord will help us to know ourselves now, it will save us from a sad discovery at the last. Let us examine ourselves, because God will examine us at the judgment day. Let us come to the plummet and to the measuring line and give up random hopes and hasty confidences. Better the distress of honest anxiety than the presumption of foolhardy rashness. It is much better to be afraid where there is no cause for fear than to be at ease where there is no ground for confidence. Well did Cowper say—

"He that never doubted of his state,
He may, perhaps, he may, too late."

He who takes things for granted may find himself out to be a fool in that day when folly will never again have opportunities for wisdom. All things will in the end be put into the scales and weighed, and infallible justice shall give its final decision. It is wise to anticipate that final and irreversible verdict by a present and honest searching of the grounds of our hope.

According to the connection of our text, there are three ways by which we may all of us judge whether our confidences are refuges of lies or not. For, first, if they are safe hiding places, such as will bear the brunt of the coming storm, they are founded upon Christ. "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation." Now examine, my dear friend, your hope for eternity. Is it the hope which God has set forth in Scripture? Is it based and bottomed upon the work of the Lord Jesus? For if not, as the Lord my God lives and as your soul lives, it will fail you in the day of trial. If God laid the foundation and you accept it, you may feel quite sure about it, for God never yet laid down a fiction as the groundwork of faith. He never mocked human reliance yet and never will. If the Lord laid the foundation you need not hesitate to build on it, for the responsibility of its security is with the Lord and not with us. We may fairly put it thus with our hearts in hours when all things are questioned—if our faith is vain, at least we have grounded it where divine revelation commanded us to ground it. If there is a failure, it is not ours only, but a failure on the part of Him who laid the foundation for us. But such a thing shall never be—the Christ of God never fails. We shall find Jesus to be what the Father declares Him to be, a sure foundation which shall support us in life, bear us up in death,

and sustain us throughout eternity. Come, search yourselves, and try your hopes by this test. Hang this plummet against your wall—do you stand even with it? Is Jesus Christ all in all to you? Do you rest on Him and on Him alone? If so, you are surely saved, but if not, you have made lies your refuge.

He then gives us a second test and that is, if our confidence is a right one, it comes to us through faith, for it is written in the sixteenth verse, "He that believes shall not make haste." He shall not be confused. He shall not run away in trepidation and alarm. He shall not be in a hurry to anticipate the day of blessing, nor be in distress about the hour of trial. "He that believes" is the man whose soul is fixed on the sure foundation and therefore abides in peace. Now, my hearers, do you believe for your salvation or do you look to your own feelings and doings? If your hope is grounded upon sight, or feeling, or working—it will one day fail you. Do you rest on ceremonies, upon something performed by a priest or a minister, or are you resting upon outward religiousness, upon attending the means of grace and bowing, kneeling, and standing like Christians? Then I warn you that these sandy foundations will be washed away when the floods come. Have you faith in Jesus Christ? Do you believe the infallible Word of God and do you confide in His infallible Son? If you do this, heaven and earth shall pass away, but never shall your foundation be moved. Your hope shall stand firm as the throne of God. Judge yourselves then by this—bring this plummet and this line to bear upon the building that you have been erecting for years and remember that if it is not of faith it is all in vain. Salvation is of grace through faith. By faith the sinner is justified and the just lives by faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God, therefore see to it that you have the faith of God's elect or your hope is vanity.

A third test seems to me to be proposed in my text, "Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." Here, then, is the test of righteousness. If our hope is sound, it is a holy, sanctifying hope which purges us from sin and breeds in us all that is true and good. This is a test which some do not like to apply. They are wonderfully pleased when we are preaching the gospel of believing, but when it comes to fruit—to the declaration that true faith works by love—they fight shy of it. But I beseech you, my brethren, be not like these foolish persons. Court those tests which are the most searching and thorough, that you may make sure work for eternity. Exercise a loving severity toward your own soul. Be lenient to every other person, but be sternly severe to your own case. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Have you this holiness? The faith that is without works is dead, being alone. Have you the works which prove the sincerity of faith? If the grace of God does not change your character, if it does not make you hate sin and strive after that which is right, just, and good, then it is not the grace of God at all. You have but the form and are without the power of it. Is this the case with you? Come, do not flinch, but go through with it and deal fairly with your own soul.

We shall now apply these tests to certain refuges which I am sure will turn out to be refuges of lies. A few of these we will mention at length. The first is *the hope which some men ground upon their own moral good-*

ness. "It will be all right with me," says one, "for I have not done anything much amiss. If I have been faulty, we are poor, imperfect creatures and we cannot help it. On the whole my aims and objectives have been greatly superior to those of the bulk of mankind. I do not think I can have incurred much wrath from God, or that I need be under any apprehension as to being judged of Him at the last great day." Alas, my friend, yours must be a refuge of lies, for it will not stand trial by the first plummet. It is not based upon the foundation which God has laid. Your hope has nothing to do with Christ, that precious cornerstone. It is evident that you do not want Him, or His blood, or His righteousness, for you are altogether independent of such help. Why should God have taken the trouble to lay a foundation in the blood of His own Son when it is evidently quite a superfluity, since you can save yourself? Do you not see that, inasmuch as you rely upon your own moral goodness, you as good as tell the Lord that the gift of His dear Son and His death on Calvary were all a mistake, a Savior was not required and an atonement was not needed? If you can save yourself, so can others and the whole plan of grace becomes an absurdity. I feel sure that since you cannot stand this first test your refuge is a false one.

Now, try the second touchstone as to faith. You have no faith in God. Your hope is not based on faith in Jesus—you have no faith except faith in yourself. You are trusting to the works of the law, but do you not know what the Scripture says, "By the works of the law there shall be no flesh justified in His sight"? You are opposing the revelation of God. He declares that men are not saved by works, but by grace, and you, on the other hand, claim salvation by your own works. You are under a gross delusion and your trust is a refuge of lies!

Moreover, my gentle boaster, is not this plea of moral goodness a lie from top to bottom? In the calmness of your mind can you prove this excellency of yours? Your outward life may have been comparatively pure, but I am not sure of that if all were known. Look back and see whether there are not more stains than you thought, more grave faults than you would like to confess. You have a very flattering memory, which obliges you by forgetting things which it would be inconvenient to remember. Your righteousness is little better than a house of cards and if you ever blow upon it with anxious breath it will come tumbling down. I call upon you to put away such folly and to open your eyes to facts. Please to recollect that even if your outward life may have been correct, God regards the heart and takes account of the inner life. Your thoughts, have they not gone after evil? Your imagination, has it never delighted in sin? Have there been no corrupt desires, no selfish ambitions? Hare you come up to the standard of God's perfection? I will ask you no more questions. I know you have not, for the testimony of the Searcher of all hearts is this, "There is none that does good, no, not one." Therefore, I know that you have not done good. You, like your fellow men, are a sinner and condemned and I beseech you put away this vain glorying and seek a better refuge. A spider's web is not slighter than this confidence of yours. A bubble is not more frail or a breath more unsubstantial. If this is your shelter, it is worse than none. The fig leaves of our first parents, when they were all dry and shriveled, were a better covering than our poor

merits. If we were not maddened by our sins, we should never be so insane as to dream of pleading our own excellence before God. If we had any just idea of what holiness is, we should confess our iniquity and then close our mouth in the silence of self-condemnation. Lay but justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet and our personal moral excellence is seen to be as a bowing wall and as a tottering fence.

I have noticed, however, in the second place, that a number of persons make a refuge for themselves out of *the notion of fate*. They say, "Everything is settled and determined and ordained and therefore if I am to be saved, I shall be saved and if I am to be lost I shall be lost. After all, we are creatures of circumstances and are like the fish of the sea taken in a net or sea birds caught in the wind, driven, we scarce know where. Let us hope that all may come right at last, but we cannot help it whatever may occur." I have no hesitation in saying that this refuge is a refuge of lies. It would not endure one of the tests and assuredly not the last, for its tendency is to deny all moral obligation and hence it is no friend to holiness. It deliberately charges God with the creature's sin and makes out the sinner to be the injured person and clear of the guilt of his own acts. Many persuade themselves that they believe it, but it is such a poor, paltry shelter that I wonder they are not ashamed to mention it. In the bottom of their hearts, those who urge it know better. Look you here, good sir, and see your own inconsistency. Why did you punish your boy this morning for willful disobedience? Why did you not say to him, "I will not chide with you, my son, nor chasten you, though you provoke me, for you cannot help it, you are ordained to it"? The thief that broke into your house the other day, did you lie still and let him take your silver? If he was ordained to have it, he would have it—why did you open the window and cry for help? When the thief was taken, did you say to the magistrate, "Do not punish him, he could not help it. No doubt some divine decree led him here"? The scoundrel that called you, "Liar," the other day and knocked you down in the street, did you rise up and with a quiet smile thank him for it, for he could not help it, he was only the agent of a divine purpose and the instrument of an omnipotent predestination which he could not resist? You never thought of such folly. You feel that those who injure you are responsible and you treat them accordingly. Now mark you are responsible, too. It is a truth that all things are fixed, but it is not a truth that therefore men may live in sin and lay the blame upon God. Whatever foreordination and predestination may be or may not be, they leave men free agents and responsible beings or else both law and gospel are absurdities and the Bible is ill written. In other matters men act not on the supposed inferences of fate, but on the evident necessities of everyday life—why not in religion? It may be true that everything is fixed, and doubtless so it is, but because it is fixed, whether I shall live or not, do I therefore refuse to eat? Because it is fixed whether I shall sleep or not, do I refuse to undress and get into my bed? Because it is predestinated whether I shall be rich or not, do I leave my shop and get away and leave my goods to sell themselves? Nay, verily, predestination or no predestination, you are all eager to get gain. Men are not such idiots in other things as they pretend to be in the things of God. The plea of fate is a fool's refuge worthy only of a brainless sot. Since it will not

stand even my feeble brush, you may be sure that it will all dissolve beneath the iron rod of the Prince of truth. It is in vain for you to say, "We were delivered to work this iniquity," for you know that you sin willingly and you refuse Christ deliberately. You choose the evil and turn your backs on the good and therefore your ruin must be laid at your own doors. Cease, then, from the vain endeavor to justify yourselves and seek unto the Lord and His Christ.

The third shelter of lies which many fly to is *a hope based upon novel doctrines*. Each age would gladly have its own gospel and the present is not behind hand in the desire to be its own prophet. Many are ready to help in this presumptuous design. Certain divines attain to eminence by undermining the gospel they pretend to defend and forging new theories upon the anvils of their own fancy. Men who would never have been known if they had acted honestly, have gained a cheap notoriety by vending heresy and yet wearing the garb and eating the bread of orthodoxy. The most fashionable form of this evil just now is the production of novelties with regard to the future punishment of the wicked. False prophets prophesy smooth things and talk of a larger hope, which being interpreted is this—that men may live very much as they like, but some time or other, and somehow or other, character will cease to operate upon destiny and the righteous and the wicked will stand on a par. This is the old doctrine of falsehood with which the sinner blesses himself in his heart, saying, "I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart." The punishment of sin has been doubted from the very beginning. The chief of all subtle thinkers said in the garden of Eden, "You shall not surely die." By this larger hope, insinuated rather than boldly stated, the serpentine philosopher tempted the woman and ruined our race. Pleased with his success, he continues to use the same artifice, asserting either that sin is trivial, or that penance can remove it, or that hell is temporary, or that the soul will be annihilated, or some other form of the same radical lie. His perpetual cry is, "You shall not surely suffer what God threatens. You may sin and yet there is a hope larger than the revelation of Jesus Christ, wider than the Savior has proclaimed." In this refuge there is no Christ and no faith in Him and assuredly there is nothing in it that conduces to holiness. Mark its influence wherever it is received. When any of our friends embrace the novel theology, do they become more devout, more earnest, more gracious, more holy as the result of it? I think not. Are these the persons who make our prayer meetings a power? Are these the winners of souls? Are these the men who speak much of Jesus and live in daily fellowship with Him? Do we see them more careful to avoid conformity to the world? Our witness is that the consequences are the reverse. Did you ever hear of a man who was converted from vice by hearing that sin would be lightly punished and who, in proportion as he grew purer in life, grew more heterodox in his views? Such an instance would be a rarity, if indeed it ever existed. But when a man who holds orthodox doctrine, backslides and declines, as a general rule he finds it convenient to adopt some novel hypothesis in order that he may feel comfortable in his sin. Is it not so? So far as my observation goes, these modern notions go with looseness of life, with worldliness of heart, with decay of prayerfulness, and with backsliding from the living God,

and as you lay this line and plummet to them, it will soon be seen that they are refuges of lies. At any rate, sirs, suppose your larger hope should turn out to be correct? In what respect will the orthodox be the losers? But suppose your larger hope should turn out to be a mere delusion? What will become of you who venture your all upon it? We are in any case upon the safe side of the hedge and this is no small advantage when the weightiest interests are at stake. Suppose there shall be no hell? If I am a believer in Christ, it matters not to me. But suppose there is—and there is—then you who are unbelievers are in an evil plight. If you do not catch this will-o'-the-wisp of a larger hope, as I believe you never will, then where are you? It behooves every man not only to make sure, but to make doubly sure. About the soul we want the utmost certainty. I would counsel you to dig deep and see what you are resting on. I would have you make sure that you do not permit a falsehood to lie like a worm at the root of your hope. Seek to know the reason for your building on Christ and when you have ascertained that, then look for God's warrant for placing stone upon stone in the upbuilding and without this do not rest. Nothing but divine authority ought to content you in the business of eternity. The views and hypotheses of the learned Dr. Somebody are of no value to me, for I can theorize for myself if I have a mind to. I want facts and certainties, for I dread every refuge of lies.

Alas, we have another brood of men whose refuge is that they make *a profession of religion*. "I am always at a place of worship," says one. "I am never absent from a single service and what is more, I joined the church some years ago and I have kept up my membership. I have been baptized and I come to the Lord's table with great regularity. I feel a good deal of pleasure in religious exercises. I am not sure that I was ever born again. I am not sure that I ever repented of sin. I am not sure that I try to live a holy life, but still I am a member of a church and that is a great comfort to me." Ah, my brethren, this will not do. Unless this membership of yours with a visible church is backed up by holy living and unless there is an inward resting upon Jesus Christ and a vital faith whereby you hold fast to Him, your name may be on the church roll, but it will not be found written in the Lamb's book of life, and this profession of yours, instead of blessing you, will curse you. If you are not savingly converted, you are guilty of a daily hypocrisy and chargeable with sacrilege for appropriating sacred things to which you have no right. Unconverted one, you are an intruder into the family of Christ; an interloper at the feast of the King of kings. Search yourselves lest, being found at the bridal feast without a wedding garment, you should be cast out into outer darkness. You need not be hurt by the exhortation, for those of us who speak to you are often forced to carry out a severe search within our own hearts. How often I put myself through my paces with many an anxious question! I have taught others, but do I know the truth for myself? I have brought others to Christ, but have I come to Christ myself? What if, after having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway! What the Lord's ministers feel bound to do to themselves, surely you need not be too proud to endure. If you are doing very little for your Lord and Master compared with others, you may well be very anxious and careful, for the doom of unprofitable servants is not a light one and barren trees are not

always allowed to stand. "Oh," says one, "but I do not like heart-searching." Then I am afraid for you. You who do not examine yourselves, you who are not willing to be tested and tried by the word of God, you cause us serious suspicion lest you may have built very rapidly with wood, hay, stubble, and yet your whole structure will be consumed in the last great fire.

Let me speak a word concerning certain ones who have *a hope of being saved which does not sanctify them,* for there are professors who feel sure they are Christians and will go to heaven and yet they show no sign of being prepared for it. They live as others live and yet imagine that they shall not die as others die. They have an outward film of morality upon their lives, but underneath it there is worldliness and love of sinful pleasure. How dare they hope? If they sow iniquity shall they reap perfection? Can a man go to heaven who is not heavenly? Can lovers of worldly pleasure enter into the dwellings of the perfect? O sirs, if your hope does not lead you to follow after holiness, away with it. God help you to away with it at once and to begin aright. Above all things dread an empty, baseless hope of heaven, for it will make hell all the more terrible.

Some, too, make a refuge of their *old experience*. Now, an old experience which is all old is a manifest deception. A true experience continues and grows day by day. Not with one even pace each day, but still, as a whole, the divine life goes forward to perfection, and where it does not do so, but comes to an end, it is not the divine life at all. Have you never heard of the man who wrote out his experience of religion when a young man that he might fall back upon it in later years? He lived in neglect of all godliness but having already experienced religion, as he said, and having made a record of it and put it away with the title deeds of his farm, he dreamed that when he came to die he might fetch it out and comfort himself with his evidences of salvation. His daughter went to the drawer and found that the mice had eaten it. Ah, dear me, it was not much loss, for that hope which is grounded on a musty experience, which is not supported by a present love of God and present prayer and present fellowship and present striving against sin, is a lie. It is all in vain to say, "I know I did experience such-and-such a thing a dozen years ago when I joined the church." What of that? If a man is alive now, he does not need to prove it by going back to the records of his youth. Present life is its own evidence. If you are not living to God today, I care not a button what you profess to have done twenty years ago. If you had a true faith then, you have it now, and if you have no faith *now*, you are in the gall of bitterness. It is true that he that believes in Christ is saved, but we must have proof of it in the consequent life. If the man is not saved from living in sin, we infer that he has not believed, and if he does not persevere to the end, we are sure that he is not one of the Lord's own, "For if any man draw back," says the Lord, "my soul shall have no pleasure in him." This is the test of true faith. Those who have really believed do not draw back unto perdition, for they have believed unto the salvation of their souls. Oh, then, I pray you, if your imaginary experience in former times has dissolved into present carelessness and sin, do not attempt to hide behind it. It will not endure the line and the plum-

met, therefore put it away and seek God this day that He may begin a sound work of grace upon your souls.

I hope I have said enough by way of laying the line and the plummet to false refuges. May the Lord arouse the carnally secure and lead them to forsake their useless hiding places and shelter themselves in Christ.

II. Very briefly let us, in the second place, PICTURE THE DESTRUCTION OF THESE REFUGES OF LIES. A man has been very comfortable in one or other of these refuges for a good number of years, but at last he is getting old and is laid aside to think. Infirmities are increasing, death is drawing nigh, and he takes a look into the dark future. He finds himself facing an eternal state and he has need of all his confidences and hopes to sustain him. Now, what happens? His spirit undergoes a great storm and what is the result? Does he dwell in a fortress which defies the hurricane? No, his shelter is so frail that, according to the text, "the hail shall sweep away the refuges of lies." A cold, hard truth falls from heaven like a hailstone and crashes right through the glass roof of his false confidence. He looks up astonished and lo, another and another forgotten truth descends with like violence and crushes through all opposition till it smites his soul. He had always hoped, good, easy man, that sunshine and quiet would last forever and then his glass house would have been all he needed. He never reckoned on these hailstones. Great truths which he forgot, neglected, and despised, come rattling down upon him from heaven pitilessly, in awful earnest and with deadly aim. He must think and he has much to think of, and no means of forgetting any of it. His conscience, which he tried to smother, awakes, and as it awakes, the big hailstones of truth come through his roof faster and faster. Down falls all his comfort and peace of mind as hailstone after hailstone pounds all his hope to pieces. "After all, I never was born again and the Scripture has well said, 'You must be born again.' I never yielded up my selfishness and I cannot be saved unless Christ is my King. I did not really close in with Christ and cast my naked soul on Him—I trusted in something else and I am lost forever." Great hailstones thus follow each other and against them the deceived heart has no defense. Presently the storm comes up with tremendous wind and the hailstones are hurled forward like terrible artillery and the naked soul finds its refuge utterly swept away—not a vestige of it remains. Refuge fails the man and his soul, unhoused, unsheltered, starts back in horror. It starts back in vain. God has now to be met and the soul has no hiding place. The fire eyes of the Most High are burning the heart through and through and rocks and hills refuse a shelter. God grant that this may not be your case and that it may not be mine. May it never be said of us, "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." Let us fly to Jesus at once. Let us most solemnly exercise faith in Him now. I pause while this is done. Is it so? Have you rested upon the Son of God for everything? Then you may go forward and neither fear hailstones nor coals of fire, for he that believes in Him shall never be confounded.

Another impressive picture is set before us in the text. "The waters shall overflow the hiding place." Imagine one who, in the time of Noah's flood, does not choose to enter into the ark for he does not care to be tied

down to God's way of deliverance. Salvation by an ark is too simple, too childish—he wants a more philosophic way. Besides, he does not care to be cooped up with Noah and a handful of narrow-minded people who shut them in and shut everybody else out. He has broader views and therefore he has found a shelter on the side of the hill, in a great cave where thousands can assemble and enjoy a liberty denied them within the pale of the ark. It is utterly preposterous to suppose the flood will ever reach so high as this elevated cave. It is hundreds of feet above the plain and in the judgment of the wisest men, it is more than safe. After a day or two of extraordinary rain, the man would look down from his hiding place and see the waters covering all the lower area and creeping up the valleys foot by foot. And he would remark upon the abundance of rain, but scoff at the idea of a general deluge. He would be easy, hoping that the rain would cease, but as it continued he would begin to think, "I may not be quite so safe after all." Imagine his horror when the flood at last fills up the ravine and creeps up the rocky steep. With cruel lip, seeking his destruction, the water threatens the cave in which he thought to dwell so safely. At last, it penetrates his hiding place. It climbs to the very roof. It sweeps over his head and his false confidence has proved his ruin. Such will be the end of all that hide themselves, but hide not in Christ.

I will tell you in what fashion this overthrow will come. First, the mirth of the mind is damped with doubt. The man does not feel so easy as he used to be. He is afraid that God's Word may be true and that things will go amiss with him. Soon the doubt has oozed into his refuge and become a pool of fear—the man is sadly afraid and the dread saturates and dissolves all his joy. The truth of God's Word still further comes home to his conscience and he begins to be more and more alarmed. Nor does he continue long in one place, for he is growingly distressed—the waters are evidently advancing upon him and he cannot escape. He has come to be altogether dismayed. He hardly knows what will become of him and within a little while, unless God's mercy shall prevent and enable him to find the true shelter, he will be drenched in despair and washed away in terror. At last he cannot believe that there is any salvation possible for him. He hears death and hell approaching and his flesh creeps with horror. Let him alone and you will find him filled with terror. If his conscience is really awake, he will dread to go to sleep at night lest he should never wake again. I have seen such in their dying moments afraid of everything, fearing alike to live or to die. At last the man is taken away and where is he? Lost, lost, lost! The hail has swept away his refuge and the flood has overwhelmed his hiding place. He has perished forever from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. None can find a ransom for him. He rejected the foundation which God laid and sought to find a refuge for himself—and he has been taken away in his presumption.

III. Time fails us, but I want you TO LEARN THE LESSON OF WARNING which I have just strength enough to indicate in a few words. May the Holy Spirit bless it, though I am scarcely able to express my thoughts.

The first lesson of warning is *let us build on God's foundation*. He knows better than we do what is right and safe. Come, you wise people, be as children and believe your God. Come, you who like something of your own imagining and yield your own fancies for once. Indulge your whims upon some common business, but in this matter it will be safer to believe God's Word than to continue dreaming and devising for yourself. You may be a very intelligent person, but will you compete in intelligence with God? Very likely you may know a hundred times more than I do. You may know a thousand times more if you choose to think so, but you cannot have a better hope than mine, for I rest on Jesus Christ alone. You may have what hope you like, but I would not change with you for all your learning. My hope lies in simply coming to Jesus and depending upon Him and learning how to love Him. I recommend the same to you. Come, and from the love of Jesus, learn how to be a Christian. Learn to be holy. Learn to be unselfish. Learn to live according to God's Word. There is a power about faith in Christ to give a man the mastery over himself—a power to be found nowhere else. I have seen the drunkard, the thief, the harlot believe in Jesus Christ and become converted—and from that very day they have become gracious, godly, pure-minded people. I have never seen anything else make such a change in men as faith does. We may surely speak as we find and use a remedy of which we see the cure. We have, moreover, tried it ourselves and therefore we speak what we know. Therefore, come and rest in Jesus and when you come to die you will at least be able to feel, "I have God's sanction for the foundation I have built upon and therefore it cannot fail." O may the Holy Spirit bring you to this.

Again, let your refuge be wholly built up of divine truth. Do not try to comfort yourself with a lie. Dear friend, let the truth be all in all to you. Counterfeit coin enriches no man. Have nothing to do with false and flattering teachings. If your hope is not built on solid, substantial matters of fact, give it up and get one that is. If your hope of being saved depends on a dream, or a voice you thought you heard in the air, or some other such nonsense, put it away. Build upon your Lord's life, death, and resurrection—build upon God's promises—build by the work of the Holy Spirit with faith and you shall have the reward of eternal life. In a word, rest on Jesus, the eternal Son of God made flesh and bleeding to death for man. Build on His complete work and there only, and then if winds blow and waters rage, you shall be safe, safe forever. God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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SATAN IN A RAGE
NO. 1502

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 2, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Woe to the inhibitors of the earth and of the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time." Revelation 12:12.

THE great battle in the heavenlies has been fought—our glorious Michael has forever overthrown the dragon and cast him down. In the highest regions, the great principle of evil has received a total defeat through the life and death of our Lord Jesus. For human sin atonement has been made and the great quarrel between God and man has come to a happy end. Everlasting righteousness has been brought in and the peace of God reigns in heaven. The conflict henceforth rages here below and in these inferior regions the prince of this world is warring mightily against the cause of God and truth. Much woe does this cause to the sons of men, woe which will never end till his power is altogether taken away.

Observe concerning our archenemy that he exercises forethought and care as to the evil enterprise to which he has set his hand. Whatever foolish men may do, the devil thinks. Others may be heedless and thoughtless, but he is anxious and full of consideration. He knows that his time or "opportunity" is short and he looks forward to its close, for he is no careless waster of time and forgetter of the end. He values his opportunity to maintain his kingdom, to distress the people of God, and to dishonor the name of Christ, and since it is but a short one, he treats it as such.

He infers the brevity of his time from the victory which Jesus has already gained over him. In reading the chapter, we saw how the man-child who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron was caught up unto God and to His throne, and then we saw the war in heaven and how the devil was cast out into the earth and his angels were cast out with him. Then was a loud voice heard on high, "Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our 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." Right well may the old serpent conclude that he will be routed on earth since he has already sustained so dire a defeat that he has fallen from heaven never to rise again. Because the man-child Christ Jesus has met him in conflict, met him when as yet all his power was unbroken, and has cast him down from his high places, he is persuaded, and well he may be, that his reign is ended and that his opportunity is short. He feels about him even now a chain which is lengthened for a while, but which shall be drawn into shorter compass and fastened down by-and-by so that he shall roam the earth no longer, but lie as a captive in his prison-house. Fallen as this apostate spirit has become, he has wit enough to look forward to the future. O that men were half as wise and would

remember their latter end. I beg you to notice this fact concerning the evil spirit, that you too may learn to acquire knowledge and then use it for practical purposes. Why should it always be that the powers of darkness appear to act more wisely than the children of light? For once I would point out a matter in which our worst foe may read us a lesson.

Among men there are some who know a great many important matters, but act as if they did not know the. Their knowledge is so much waste stored up in the lumber room of their minds and never brought into the workshop to be used for practical purposes. For instance, we know our mortality and yet live as if we never meant to die. There is great necessity for many of us to pray, "Lord, teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." We must know that our time is short and that our life will soon come to an end and yet we fail to know it practically, for we are not as earnest as dying men ought to be. In this, the archenemy is not so foolish as we are, for he so well knows that his time is short that he remembers the fact and is actuated by it.

Note well the direction in which this knowledge operates upon him. It excites his emotions. The deepest emotion of which he is capable is that of anger, for he knows not how to love. Wrath is his very soul, as hatred is his very life. He knows nothing of gentleness, nothing of affection, and therefore the fact that his time is short moves within him his master passion and he has great wrath. His evil nature is all on fire and his excitement is terrible. How much the shortness of our time ought to stir our hearts! With what ardency of love and fervency of zeal ought we to pass the days of our sojourning here! Knowing that the time of our departure is at hand and that the season in which we can serve God among the sons of men is very brief, we ought to be excited to flaming zeal and passionate love. We are not half stirred as we ought to be. Devils feel great hatred—how is it that we do not feel great love? Shall they be more eager to destroy than we are to save? Shall they be all alive and shall we be half dead?

Nor is the result of knowing that his time is short merely emotional on the part of the archenemy, for in consequence of his great wrath, he is moved to make earnest efforts. His energy is excited. He persecutes the woman whose seed he dreads and he pours floods out of his mouth against her. There is nothing which Satan can do for his evil cause which he does not do. We may be half-hearted, but he never is. He is the very image of ceaseless industry and indefatigable earnestness. He will do all that can be done in the time of his permitted range. We may be sure that he will never lose a day. My brethren, you and I, on the other hand, should be moved by the shortness of our opportunity to an equal energy of incessant industry, serving God continually because, "The night comes wherein no man can work." My friend, if you want your children brought to Christ, speak to them, for they will soon be without a father. If you wish your servants to be saved, labor for their conversion, for they will soon be without a mistress. If you desire your brother to be converted, speak to him, for your sisterly love will not much longer avail him. Minister, if you would save your congregation by the Spirit of God, seek to do it at once, for your tongue will soon be silent. Teacher in the Sunday school, if you would have your class gathered into the good Shepherd's

fold, treasure up every Sabbath's opportunities, for in a short time the place which knows you now shall know you no more forever.

Thus, as of old the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen every man his plowshare and his axe and his shovel, so have I bidden you quicken your diligence by the example of the prince of darkness. Shall we not learn wisdom from his subtlety and zeal from his fury? Shall he discern the signs of the times and therefore bestir himself and shall we sleep on? Shall evil compass sea and land and shall the children of God creep about in idleness? God forbid. By the great wrath of the old dragon, I beseech you, my brethren, awake out of your sleep.

The text tells us that the shortness of Satan's opportunity excites his wrath and we may gather a general rule from this one statement—namely, that *in proportion as the devil's time is shortened, his energy is increased* and we may take it as an assured fact that when he rages to the uttermost his opportunities are nearly over. He has great wrath, knowing that his time is short. I hope there will be something of instruction in this and somewhat of comfort for all those who are on the right side. May the Holy Spirit make it so.

In the world around us we must not consider that things go altogether amiss when the powers of evil become strong. We should be foolish if we wept in despair because the tares are ripening, for is not the wheat ripening, too? True, the dead become more and more corrupt, but if the living become more and more active, why should we lament? Because blasphemy grows loud, because infidels seek to undermine the foundation of the faith, or because the clouds of superstition grow more dense, we must not, therefore, conclude that we have fallen upon evil times, the like of which were never seen before. Not so. Oftentimes the development of evil is an indication that there is an equal or a greater development of good and the climax of ill is frequently its end. Do you not know that in the world of nature the darkest time of the night is that which precedes the dawning of the day? May it not be the same in the spiritual and moral world? Does not the old proverb tell us concerning the year that "As the day lengthens the cold strengthens"? As the spring comes with lengthened days, the frosts often grow more sharp and hard. Is it not also plain to the simplest mind that the turning of the tide happens when the ebb has reached its utmost? Even so, when evil is at its height, it is nearest to its fall. Look for confirmation to the page of history. When the tale of bricks was doubled, Moses came to deliver the oppressed. When Pharaoh would by no means let the people go and his yoke seemed riveted upon the neck of Israel, then the right arm of God was made bare and the Red Sea beheld His vengeance. When despots grow most tyrannical, liberty's hour is coming. When the lie becomes exceedingly bold and wears a brazen forehead, then it is that the truth confounds her. When Goliath stalks abroad and defies the armies of Israel, then is the stone already in the sling and the David hard at hand to lay the giant low. Do not, therefore, dread the advent of greater opposition, nor the apparent increase in strength of those oppositions which already exist, for it has always been so in the history of events that the hour of the triumph of evil is the hour of its doom. When Belshazzar profanes the holy vessels, the handwriting blazes on the wall. And when Haman is at the king's

banquet of wine seeking the blood of the whole race of the Jews, the gallows are prepared for him upon his own roof.

It shall be seen, even to the last hour of history, that the devil rages the more when his empire is the nearer to its end. At the very last he shall go about to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle. They shall come up in great hosts, fierce for the conflict, to "the battle of the great day of God Almighty" at Armageddon. It shall then seem as if the light of Israel must be quenched and the truth of God utterly extinguished. But in that dread hour the Lord shall triumph gloriously and He shall smite His adversaries to their final overthrow. Then shall the angel standing in the sun invite the vultures and all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven to gather to the grim feast of vengeance, to eat the flesh of horsemen and men of might. Then also shall the devil that deceived them be cast into the lake of fire and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then also shall the shout be heard, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigns." On the greatest possible scale, the greatness of the dragon's wrath is a sure prophecy of the end of his reign.

Now, what is true on a great scale is true in the smaller one. Missionaries in any country will generally find that the last onslaught of heathenism is the most ferocious. We shall find, whenever the truth comes into contact with falsehood, that when error is driven to its last entrenchments, it fights for life, tooth and nail, with all its might. Its wrath is great because its time is short. In any village or town in England, or in any other country, whenever the opposition to the gospel reaches its most outrageous pitch and men seem as if they would murder the preacher of the Word, you may reckon that the power of the opposition is almost over. After the mad fit, active persecution will cease and there will come a time of calm and perhaps of general reception of the gospel. When once the bad passions of mankind shall have boiled up, they will cool down again. Has not the Lord promised to restrain it? As the burning heat of the noontide sun lasts not forever, but gradually abates when it has reached the hottest point, so is it with the wrath of man which the foul fiend so often uses for his base purposes.

The same truth will apply to every individual man. When God begins His great work in a sinner's heart, to lead him to Christ, it is no bad sign if the man feels more hatred to God than ever, more dislike to good things than before. Nor need we despair if he is driven into greater sin than ever. The ferocity of the temptation indicates the vigor with which Satan contends for any one of his black sheep. Satan will not lose his subjects if he can help it and so he drives forth all his strength to keep them under his power. And he is especially vigilant and furious when the power of grace is about to prevail for their salvation. I will not, however, dwell upon this point, because it is to be the subject of our discourse.

The general fact is further illustrated in the cases of many believers. There are times when in the believer's heart the battle rages horribly, when he hardly knows whether he is a child of God at all and is ready to give up all hope. He cannot pray or praise for he is so distracted. He cannot read the Scriptures without horrible thoughts. It seems as if he must utterly perish for no space is given him in which to refresh his

heart, the attacks are so continual and violent. Such dreadful excitements are often followed by years of peace, quiet usefulness, holiness, and communion with God. Satan knows that God is about to set a limit to his vexations of the good man and so he rages extremely because his opportunity is short. It is very remarkable that some of the greatest of the saints have died in the midst of the most fearful conflicts for the same reason. The dog howled at them because he knew that they would soon be out of his reach. You would not suppose that Martin Luther, a man so brave and strong that he could defy the Pope and the devil, should on his dying bed be woefully put to it—and yet it was so—his worst struggle was the closing one. He was more than a conqueror, but the fight was severe, as if the devil, that old coward, waited until he had his antagonist down. Waited until he was weak and feeble and then leaped upon him to worry if he could not devour him. Truly Luther had worried the devil and we do not wonder at the malice of the fiend. Satan knew that Luther would soon be out of the reach of his fiery arrows forever and therefore he must needs have a last shot at him. It was precisely the case with John Knox, who being observed to sigh deeply, was asked the cause of it and replied, "I have formerly, during my frail life, sustained many tests and many assaults of Satan. But at present he has assailed me most fearfully and put forth all his strength to devour and make an end of me at once. Often before has he placed my sins before my eyes. Often he has tempted me to despair. Often endeavored to ensnare me by the allurements of the world, but these weapons were broken by the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and the enemy failed. Now he has attacked me in another way—the cunning serpent has labored to persuade me that I have merited heaven and eternal blessedness by the faithful discharge of my ministry. But blessed be God who has enabled me to beat down and quench this fiery dart by suggesting to me such passages of Scripture as these, 'What have you that you have not received?' 'By the grace of God I am what I am: not I, but the grace of God in me.' Upon this, as one vanquished, he left me. Wherefore I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ, who has been pleased to give me the victory and I am persuaded that the tempter shall not again attack me, but within a short time, I shall, without any great pain of body or anguish of mind, exchange this mortal and miserable life for a blessed immortality through Jesus Christ."

Do you wonder that the devil was eager to have another knock at one who had given so many knocks to his dominion? Do not, therefore, be at all surprised if Satan rages against you, nor marvel if you yourself should seem to be given into his power, but rather rejoice in this, that his great wrath is the token of the shortness of his time. He wages war with us all the more cruelly because he knows that he will ultimately be defeated. His degraded mind delights in petty malice—if he cannot destroy, he will disturb—if he cannot kill, he will wound. Subtle as he is, he acts right foolishly in pursuing a hopeless object. In his war against any one of the seed of the woman, he knows that he is doomed to defeat and yet he gnaws at the heel which breaks his head. It is the doom of evil to persevere in its spite after it knows that it is all in vain—to be forever vanquished by the invincible seed of the living God and yet forever to return

to the fray. Sisyphus forever rolling upward a huge stone which returns upon him is a true picture of the devil vainly laboring to remove the truth out of its place. His is indeed "labor in vain."

I thought this morning that I would call attention to one particular instance of the fact which is seen in the soul that is coming to Christ, in whom Satan often has great wrath knowing that his time is short. My objective is to comfort those who are awakened and are seeking the Savior. If they are sorely beset, I long that they may find peace and rest and hope very speedily. When the poor man who was possessed with an evil spirit was being brought to Christ, we read that, "As he was a coming, the devil threw him down and tore him." That is the way with the great enemy—when he is about to be cast out, his energy is more displayed than ever—that if possible he may destroy the soul before it has obtained peace with God. May the sacred Comforter help me while I try to speak encouragingly upon this subject.

I. Our first head shall be, HOW DOES SATAN KNOW WHEN HIS TIME IS SHORT IN A SOUL? He watches over all souls that are under his power with incessant maliciousness. He goes about the camp like a sentinel, spying out every man who is likely to be a deserter from his army. In some men's hearts he dwells at ease, like a monarch in his pavilion—their minds are his favorite mansions—he goes in and out whenever he pleases and he makes himself wonderfully much at home. He counts the man's nature to be his own inheritance and he works within him after his own evil pleasure. Alas, the deceived man yields his members as instruments of unrighteousness and is willingly held in thralldom. In such a case all the man's faculties are so many chambers for Satan to dwell in and his emotions are so many fires and forges for Satan to work with. But by-and-by, if divine grace interposes, there comes a change and Satan, who has lived there twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years, begins to think that he shall not be able to keep this residence of his much longer. He perceives that his time is short and I suppose he perceives it first by discovering that he is not quite so welcome as he used to be. The man loved sin and found pleasure in it, but now sin is not so sweet as it was, its flavor is dull and insipid. The charms of vice are fading and its pleasures are growing empty, vain, and void and this is a token of a great change. Once, whenever a pilgrim sin came that way, the soul kept open house to entertain it with all hospitality, but now it is not half so eager. Even the home-dwelling habitual lusts do not yield so much content as before, neither is so much provision made for them. The black prince and his court are out of favor and this is an intimation that he must soon be gone. When sin loses its sweetness, Satan is losing his power. The adversary perceives that he must soon stretch his dragon wings when he sees that the heart is growing weary of him and is breaking away from his fascinations.

He grows surer of his speedy ejectment when *he does not get the accommodation he used to have*. The man was once eager for sin. He went in the pursuit of vice, hunted after it and put himself in the way of temptation, and then Satan reigned securely, but now he begins to forsake the haunts where sin walks openly and he abandons the cups of excitement which inflame the soul. You find him going to a place of worship, listen-

ing to a sermon, whereas before he frequented the theater and enjoyed a loose song at a music hall. The devil does not like this change and takes it as a warning that he will soon have to give up the key. The man does not drink as once he did, nor swear as once he did. Nor does he yield himself up with readiness to every temptation. The fish is getting shy of the bait. The awakened man has not decided for Christ, but he is no longer at ease in bondage, no longer the glad slave of iniquity. He is on the wrong road, but he does not run in it. On the contrary, he pauses, he heaves a sigh and wishes he could leave the evil road. He wishes he knew how to leap a hedge and get into the narrow way. Satan marks all this and he says to himself, "There is not the preparation made for me that there used to be. There is little readiness to run on my errands and therefore I perceive that my time is short."

He is still more convinced of the shortness of his possession of a man's heart *when he hears knocking at that heart's door a hand whose power he has felt*. He knows the kind of knock it is—a gentle, but an irresistible knocking upon the heart. Continual, perpetual, persevering—the knock of one who means to enter. The knock as of one that has a hole in his hand. He knocks not as one whose power lies in a blow, but as one whose tears and love are his battery of attack. He has an energy of compassion, an irresistibleness of gentle love, and as Satan hears the knock and perceives that the tenant of the house hears it too and is half inclined to open the door, he is afraid. When the heart relents at the sound of the gospel summons, he trembles more. If the knocking still continues, waking up the tenant in the dead of night, a sound heard amid the noise of traffic and above the laughter of fools, he says, "My time is short." He knows the hand, which broke his head of old, and its knocking is ominous to him.

He knows that in the gentleness of Jesus there is an irresistible energy which must and will prevail and he, therefore, counts that his possession of the tenement is precarious when the gospel is felt upon the heart. Between the knocks, he hears a voice that says, "Open to Me! Open to Me, for My head is wet with dew and My locks with the drops of the night!" And Satan knows that this pleading voice bodes the downfall of his power.

Another indication to the enemy that his time is short is *when he knows that the tenant of the house steals away sometimes to court and asks for a warrant of ejectment against him*. You know what I mean—when the man feels that he cannot himself get rid of sin and cannot in his own strength conquer Satan and therefore cries, "O God help me. O God, for Christ's sake, drive out the old dragon from my soul, I beseech You." This is asking for a warrant of ejectment. This is going to the court of heaven and pleading with the great King to issue a summons and send His officer to throw out the intruder, that he may no longer pollute the spirit. "Ah," says the evil one, "this is not the place for me much longer. Behold he prays." More fierce than the flames of hell to Satan are the prayers of convinced sinners. When they pray, he must be gone. He must cry, "Boot and saddle!" when men sound the trumpet of prayer. There is no tarrying in the camp any longer when the advance guard of prayer has come to take possession.

One thing more always makes Satan know that his time is short and that is *when the Holy Spirit's power is evidently at work within the mind.* Light has come in and the sinner sees and knows what he was ignorant of before. Satan hates the light as much as he loves darkness and, like an owl in the daylight, he feels that he is out of place. Life comes in, too, by the Holy Spirit. The man *feels.* He becomes sensitive. He becomes penitent. And Satan, who loves death and always abides among the tombs, is bound to flee before spiritual life. The Holy Spirit is beginning to work upon the man very graciously and Satan knows every throb of the Spirit's power, for it is the death of his power and so he says, "I will go to the place from where I came out, for this house trembles as if it were shaken with earthquakes and affords me no rest." Joyful tidings for a heart long molested by this fierce fiend! Away, you enemy, your destructions shall soon come to a perpetual end!

II. This brings me, secondly, to notice that, inasmuch as the shortness of his tenure excites the rage of Satan, we must next observe HOW HE DISPLAYS HIS GREAT WRATH. His fury rages differently in different persons. On some he displays his great wrath by stirring up outward persecution. The man is not a Christian yet. He is not actually converted yet, but Satan is so afraid that he will be saved that he sets all his dogs upon him directly. The poor soul goes into the workshop and though he would give his eyes if he could say, "I am a Christian," he cannot quite say so—and yet his workmates begin to pounce upon him as much as if he were in very deed one of the hated followers of Jesus. They scoff at him because he is serious and sober, because he is beginning to think and to be decent, because he begins to listen to the gospel and to care for the best things. Before the man-child was born, the dragon was longing to devour Him. Before the man gets to be a Christian, the prince of the power of the air labors, if possible, to destroy him. The devil will lose nothing through being behind. He begins as soon as ever grace begins. Now, if the grace of God is not in the awakened man and his reformation is only a spasm of remorse, it is very likely that he will be driven back from all attendance upon the means of grace by the vulgar remarks of the ungodly, but if the Lord Jesus Christ has really been knocking at his door and the Spirit of God has begun to work, this opposition will not answer its purpose. The Lord will find wings for this poor soul that he may flee away from the trial which as yet he is not able to bear. I have sometimes known such opposition even tend to undo Satan's work and answer quite the opposite purpose. I know one who was much troubled about the truth of Scripture and about the doctrines of the gospel, although he was a sincere searcher into the truth. He commenced to attend this house of prayer and to listen to the gospel, rather as an inquirer than as a believer. As yet he could not say that he was a Christian, though he half wished he could. Now, it came to pass that the opposition which he immediately received from the world strengthened his faith in the Bible and became a sort of missing link between him and the truth. The sneers of his friends acted in this way. He said to himself, "Why should they all attack me on the bare supposition of my being a Christian? If I had been a Muslim or a Jew, they would have regarded me with curiosity and let me alone, but inasmuch as they only suspect me of becoming a Christian, they are all

down upon me with contempt and anger. Now (said he), why is this? Is not this a proof that I am right and that the Word of God is right, for did it not say that there should be enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman?" The devil did not know what he was doing when he opposed that young man and made a believer of him by that which was meant to drive him into unbelief. If the men of this world oppose the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ more fiercely than any other, surely it must be that there is something special in it, something opposed to their sinful ways or to their proud hopes—something which is of God. That was the inference which my young friend drew from the treatment he received and that inference established him in the faith. Thus, you see, Satan often hopes to save his dominion when his time is short by vehement persecution against the awakened sinner.

Much worse, however, is his other method of showing his wrath, namely, by vomiting floods out of his mouth to drown, if possible, our newborn hope. When the hopeful hearer as yet has not really found peace and rest, it will sometimes happen that Satan will try him with doubts and blasphemies and temptations such as he never knew before. The tempted one has been amazed and has said to himself, "How is this? Can my desire after Christ be the work of God? I get worse and worse. I never felt so wicked as this till I began to seek a Savior." Yet this is no strange thing, fiery though the trial is.

Satan will suggest all the doubts he can upon the inspiration of Scripture, the existence of God, the deity of Christ and everything else that is revealed till the poor heart that is earnestly longing for salvation will scarcely know whether there is anything true at all. The man will be so tumbled up and down in his thoughts that he will hardly know whether he is on his head or his heels. "They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end." The more they read the Bible, the more they attend the means of grace, the more are they tempted to be skeptical and atheistic. Doubts they never knew before will torment them even while they strive to be devout. The evil tenant has notice to quit and he makes up his mind to do all the damage within his power while he is yet within the doors. See how he breaks up precious truths and dashes down the richest hopes, and all with the detestable design of venting his spite upon the poor soul.

At such time, also, Satan will often arouse all the worst passions of our nature and drive them into unknown riot. The awakened sinner will be astonished as he finds himself beset with temptations more base and foul than he has ever felt before. He will resist and strive against the assault, but it may be so violent as to stagger him. He can scarcely believe that the flesh is so utterly corrupt. The man who is anxiously seeking to go to heaven seems at such a time as if he were dragged down by seven strong demons to the eternal deeps of perdition. He feels as if he had never known sin before, nor been so completely beneath its power. The Satanic troopers sleep as a quiet garrison while the man is under the spell of sin, but when once the heart is likely to be captured by Immanuel's love, the infernal soldiery put on their worst manner and trample down all the thoughts and desires of the soul.

Satan may also attack the seeker in another form, with fierce accusations and judgments. He does not accuse some men, for he is quite sure of them and they are his very good friends. But when a man is likely to be lost to him, he alters his tone and threatens and condemns. He cries, "What, you be saved! It is impossible! You know what you used to be. Think of your past life." Then he rakes up a very hell before the man's eyes. "You!" says he, "why even since you have pretended to be a little better and have begun to attend the means of grace, you know you have looked back with a longing eye and hungered for your old pleasures. It is quite out of the question that you should be a servant of Christ! He will not have such a scarecrow as you in His house. The great Captain will never march at the head of a regiment which is disgraced by receiving such as you." Bunyan describes Apollyon as standing across the road and swearing by his infernal den that the pilgrim should go no further. There he would spill his soul. Then he began to fling at him all manner of fiery darts and among them was this one, "You did faint at first setting out, when you were almost choked in the gulf of Despond. You were almost persuaded to go back at the sight of the lions. You have been false already to your new Lord!" Think for a moment of the devil chiding us for sin! Oh, that the poor burdened soul could laugh at this hypocritical accuser, for he hates to be despised and yet he right well deserves it. Laugh at him, O virgin daughter of Zion, for this great wrath of his is because his time is short. Who is he that he should bring an accusation against us? Let him mind himself—he has enough to answer for. When he turns an accuser, it is enough to make the child of God laugh him to scorn. Yet it is not easy to laugh when you are in this predicament, for the heart is ready to break with anguish.

Once more, Satan at such times has been known to pour into the poor troubled mind floods of blasphemy. I do not recollect as a child having heard blasphemy. Carefully brought up and kept out of harm's way, I think it could only have been once or twice that I ever heard profane language. And yet, when I was seeking the Lord, I distinctly remember the spot where the most hideous blasphemies that ever passed the human mind rushed through my mind. I clapped my hands to my mouth for fear I should utter one of them. They were none of my inventing, neither had I revived them from my memory—they were the immediate suggestions of Satan himself, who was determined, if possible, to drive me to despair. Read the story of John Bunyan's five years of torture under this particular misery and you will see how Satan would say to him, "Sell Christ. Sell Christ. Give up Christ," and as he went about his daily business, he would have it ringing in his ears, "Sell Christ. Sell Christ." When at last, in a moment of worry, he thought he said, "Let Him go if He will." Then came the accusation, "Now it is all over with you. Jesus will have nothing to do with you. You have given Him up. You are a Judas. You have sold your Lord." Then when the poor man sought the Lord with tears and found peace again, some other dreadful insinuation would dog his heels. John Bunyan was too precious a servant of the devil for him to lose him readily, and the enemy had perhaps some idea of what kind of servant of God the converted tinker would become—and what sort of dreams would charm the hearts of many generations—and so he would not let him go

without summoning all the tribes of hell to wreak their vengeance on him if they could not detain him in their service. Yet Bunyan escaped and so will others in like case. Oh, bond slave of the devil, may you have grace to steal away to Jesus. Hasten away from Satan's power at once, for otherwise he will, as long as he has any opportunity, manifest his great wrath towards you.

III. Thirdly and briefly, let us think HOW ARE WE TO MEET ALL THIS? How must Satan be dealt with while he is showing his great wrath because his power is short?

I should say, first, if he is putting himself in this rage, let us get him out all the more quickly. If he would remain quiet, even then we ought to be anxious to be rid of his foul company, but if he shows this great rage, let us out with him straight away. In God's name let the dragon be smitten if he must be raving. If there is any opportunity of getting him out, back door or front door, straight away do not let us loiter or linger even for a single hour—a devil raging, making us blaspheme, and then accusing us, tempting us, and betraying us, is such a dangerous occupant of a heart that he is not to be borne with. Out he must go and out at once. Better have a den of lions dwelling in our house than the devil within our heart. Lord, turn him out at once by Your own grace. We decide once for all to wage war with him. We will linger no longer. We dare not. We will procrastinate no more, it is more than our lives are worth. No, not tomorrow, but today out must the tyrant go. No, not after we leave this Tabernacle, but here, in this very pew, O Lord, drive the old dragon from his throne with all his hellish crew! That is the first advice I give you—let the enemy be cast out at once by grace divine.

And the next thing is, inasmuch as we cannot get him out by our own unaided efforts, let us cry to the strong for strength, who can drive out this prince of the power of the air. There is life in a look at Jesus Christ and as soon as that life comes, away goes this prince of darkness as to his domination and reigning power. Oh, soul, there is nothing left for you but to look to Jesus Christ alone. Worried as you are and almost devoured, now is your time to put your trust in Jesus who is mighty to save. You know the text which speaks of the shepherds taking out of the lion's mouth two legs and a piece of an ear? The sheep was almost devoured, but still the shepherd pulled out from between the lion's jaws the last relics of his prey, and if you seem to be reduced to two legs and a piece of an ear, yet still our glorious Shepherd can pull you out from between the lion's teeth and make you whole again, for He will not lose His sheep even at its last extremity. What can you do against Satan? You would gladly be rid of him—what can you do? Do nothing but this—cry to his Master against him. Satan is mighty—set the Almighty One upon him. He accuses you—refer him to your Advocate. He brings your sin before you—throw the blood of atonement in his face. Here is a text that will drive him down to his den, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." And, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Have done with battling with the wily foe. Do not answer the old deceiver. If he tells you, you are a blasphemer, own it. If he

says you are utterly lost, own it, and then cast yourself at Jesus' feet and He will overcome your foe and set you free.

One more comfort for you and it is this—the more Satan rages, the more must your poor, troubled heart be encouraged to believe that he will soon be gone. I venture to say that nothing will make him go sooner than your full belief that he has to go. Courageous hope is a weapon which he dreads. Tell him he must soon be gone. He has been accusing you and pouring venom into your ear and making you believe that it is your own blasphemy, whereas it is not yours, but his. Say to him, "Ah, but you will be gone soon. You may rage, but you will have to be gone." "I have full possession of you," he says, "soul and body, and I triumph over you." Say to him, "And would you triumph over me as you do if you did not know that you will soon be driven out?" "Ah," says he, "you will be lost, you will be lost." He howls at you as if ready to devour. Say to him, "If I was sure to be lost, you would not tell me so, you would sing sweet songs in my ears and lure me to destruction—you have to go, you know you have to." "Oh," says he, "it is impossible you should be saved. You will be damned. You will have the hottest place in hell." "Yes," reply to him, "but who sent you to tell me that? You never spoke the truth yet. You are a liar from the beginning and you are only saying this because you have to go. You know you have to go." Tell him so and it is not long before he will depart. Say, "Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; though I fall, yet shall I rise again." Tell him you know his Master. Tell him he may nibble at your heel, but you recollect one that broke his head. Point to his broken head he always tries to hide if he can. Tell him his crown is battered to pieces and tell him where that deed was done and by whose blessed hand. And as you tell him these things, he will shrink back and you shall find yourself alone with Jesus only. Then will Jesus say to you, "Where is your accuser?" You will look around and the enemy will be gone, and then your blessed Master will say, "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more." The Lord grant us to get such a riddance of our archenemy and to get it this very moment for Christ's dear sake. Amen.

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HOW TO READ THE BIBLE
NO. 1503

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

"Have you not read?...Have you not read?...If you had known what this means." Matthew 12:3-7.

THE scribes and Pharisees were great readers of the Law of God. They studied the sacred books continually, poring over each word and letter. They made notes of very little importance, but still very curious notes as to which was the middle verse of the entire Old Testament, which verse was half-way to the middle and how many times such a word occurred—and even how many times a *letter* occurred and the size of the letter and its peculiar position. They have left us a mass of wonderful notes upon the mere words of Holy Scripture. They might have done the same thing upon another book, for that matter, and the information would have been about as important as the facts which they have so industriously collected concerning the letter of the Old Testament.

They were, however, intense readers of the Law. They picked a quarrel with the Savior upon a matter touching this Law, for they carried it at their fingertips and were ready to use it as a bird of prey does its talons to tear and rend. Our Lord's disciples had plucked some ears of corn and rubbed them between their hands. According to Pharisaic interpretation, to rub an ear of corn is a kind of *threshing* and, as it is very wrong to thresh on the Sabbath, therefore it must be very wrong to rub out an ear or two of corn when you are hungry on the Sabbath! That was their argument and they came to the Savior with it and with their version of the Sabbath Law.

The Savior generally carried the war into the enemy's camp and He did so on this occasion. He met them on their own ground and He said *to them*, "Have you not read?" a cutting question to the scribes and Pharisees, though there is nothing apparently sharp about it! It was a very fair and proper question to put to them, but only think of putting it to *them*—"Have you not *read*?" "Read!" They could have said, "Why, we have read the Book through many times! We are *always* reading it! No passage escapes our critical eyes." Yet our Lord proceeds to put the question a second time, "Have you not read?" as if they had not read, after all, though they were the greatest readers of the Law then living! He insinuates that they have not read at all and then He gives them, incidentally, the reason why He had asked them whether they had read.

He says, "If you had known what this means," as much as to say, "You have not read because you have not understood." Your eyes have gone over the words and you have counted the letters. You have even marked the position of each verse and word and you have said learned things about all the books and yet you are not really readers of the sacred Volume, for you have not acquired the true art of *reading*—you do not *under-*

stand and, therefore, you do not truly read it! You are mere skimmers and glancers at the Word of God—you have not read it, for you do not understand it.

I. That is the subject of our present discourse, or, at least, the first point of it, that IN ORDER TO THE TRUE READING OF THE SCRIPTURES, THERE MUST BE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THEM. I scarcely need to preface these remarks by saying that we *must read* the Scriptures. You know how necessary it is that we should be fed upon the Truth of Holy Scripture. Need I suggest the question as to whether you read your Bibles or not? I am afraid that this is a magazine-reading age—a newspaper-reading age, a periodical-reading age—but not so much a Bible-reading age as it ought to be.

In the old Puritan times men used to have a scant supply of other literature, but they found a library enough in the one book, the Bible! And how they read the Bible! How little of Scripture there is in modern sermons compared with the sermons of those masters of theology, the Puritan Divines! Almost every sentence of theirs seems to cast side lights upon a text of Scripture—not only the one they are preaching about—but many others, as well, are set in a new light as the discourse proceeds. They introduce blended lights from other passages which are parallel or semi-parallel and thus they educate their readers to compare spiritual things with spiritual.

I would to God that we ministers kept more closely to the grand old Book. We would be instructive preachers if we did, even if we were ignorant of "modern thought" and were not "abreast of the times." I guarantee you we should be leagues ahead of our times if we kept closely to the Word of God! As for you, my Brothers and Sisters, who have not to preach, the best food for you is the Word of God itself. Sermons and books are well enough, but streams that run for a long distance above ground gradually gather for themselves some of the soil through which they flow and they lose the cool freshness with which they started from the spring head.

The Truth of God is sweetest where it breaks from the smitten Rock, for at its first gush, it has lost none of its heavenliness and vitality. It is always best to drink at the well and not from the tank. You shall find that reading the Word of God for *yourselves*, reading *it* rather than notes upon it, is the surest way of growing in Divine Grace. Drink of the unadulterated milk of the Word of God and not of the skim milk, or the milk and water of *man's* word. But, now, Beloved, our point is that much *apparent* Bible reading is not Bible reading at all—the verses pass under the eyes and the sentences glide over the mind—but there is no true *reading*.

An old preacher used to say the Word has mighty free course among many, nowadays, for it goes in one of their ears and out the other—and so it seems to be with some readers—they can read a very great deal because they do not read anything. The eyes glance but the mind never rests. The soul does not light upon the Truth of God and stay there. It flits over the landscape as a bird might do, but it builds no nest and finds no rest for the sole of its feet. Such reading is not reading! Understanding the *mean-*

ing is the essence of true reading. Reading has a kernel to it and the mere shell is of little worth.

In prayer there is such a thing as praying in prayer a praying that is the heart of the prayer. So in praise there is a praising in song, an inward fire of intense devotion which is the life of the hallelujah. It is so in fasting—there is a fasting which is not fasting—and there is an inward fasting, a fasting of the soul, which is the soul of fasting. It is even so with the reading of the Scriptures. There is an interior reading, a *kernel* reading, a true and living reading of the Word. This is the soul of reading and, if it is not there, the reading is a mechanical exercise and profits nothing. Now, Beloved, unless we understand what we read, we have not read it—the heart of the reading is absent.

We commonly condemn the Romanists for keeping the daily service in the Latin tongue. Yet it might as well be in the Latin language as in any other tongue if it is not understood by the people! Some comfort themselves with the idea that they have done a good thing when they have read a chapter of Scripture into the meaning of which they have not entered at all! But does not Nature, herself, reject this as a mere superstition? If you had turned the Bible upside down and spent the same time in looking at the characters in *that* direction, you would have gained as much good from it as you will in reading it in the regular way without understanding it.

If you had a New Testament in Greek, it would be very Greek to some of you, but it would do you as much good to look at that as it does to look at the English New Testament unless you read with an understanding heart. It is not the letter which saves the soul—the letter kills, in many senses, and it never can give life. If you harp on only the letter, you may be tempted to use it as a weapon against the Truth of God as the Pharisees did of old. And your knowledge of the letter may breed pride in you to your destruction. It is the *spirit*, the real inner meaning that is sucked into the soul by which we are blessed and sanctified.

We become saturated with the Word of God, like Gideon's fleece, which was wet with the dew of Heaven—and this can only come to pass by our receiving it into our minds and hearts, accepting it as God's Truth and, so far understanding it as to delight in it. We must understand it, then, or else we have not read it aright. Certainly, the benefit of reading must come to the soul by the way of the understanding. When the High Priest went into the Holy Place, he always lit the golden candlestick before he kindled the incense upon the bronze altar, as if to show that the mind must have illumination before the affections can properly rise towards their Divine object. There must be knowledge of God before there can be love of God—there must be a knowledge of Divine things, as they are revealed, before there can be an enjoyment of them.

We must try to make out, as far as our finite mind can grasp, what God means by this and what He means by that. Otherwise we may kiss the book and have no love to its contents. We may reverence the letter and yet really have no devotion towards the Lord who speaks to us in these words. Beloved, you will never get comfort to your soul out of what you do not

understand, nor find guidance for your life out of what you do not comprehend! Nor can any practical bearing upon your character come out of that which is not understood by you. Now, if we are thus to understand what we read or otherwise we read in vain, this shows us that when we come to the study of Holy Scripture we should try to have our mind well awake to it.

We are not always fit, it seems to me, to read the Bible. At times it were well for us to stop before we open the volume. "Take off your shoes, for the place where you stand is holy ground." You have just come in from careful thought and anxiety about your worldly business—you cannot immediately take the Bible and enter into its heavenly mysteries. As you ask a blessing over your meat before you eat, so it would be a good rule for you to ask a blessing on the Word of God before you partake of its heavenly food. Pray the Lord to strengthen your eyes before you dare to look into the eternal light of Scripture!

As the priests washed their feet at the laver before they went to their holy work, so it were well to wash the soul's eyes with which you look upon God's Word—to wash even the fingers, if I may so speak of the *mental* fingers with which you will turn from page to page—that with a holy book you may deal after a holy fashion. Say to your soul, "Come, Soul, wake up! You are not, now, about to read the newspaper. You are not, now, perusing the pages of a human poet to be dazzled by his flashing poetry. You are coming very near to *God* who sits in the Word like a crowned monarch in his halls! Wake up, my glory! Wake up, all that is within me! Though just now I may not be praising and glorifying God, I am about to consider that which should lead me to do so and, therefore, it is an act of devotion. So be on the stir, my Soul! Be on the stir and bow not sleepily before the awful Throne of the Eternal."

Scripture reading is our spiritual mealtime. Sound the gong and call in every faculty to the Lord's own table to feast upon the precious meat which is now to be partaken of, or, rather, ring the Church bells as for worship, for the studying of the Holy Scripture ought to be as solemn a deed as when we lift the Psalm upon the Sabbath in the courts of the Lord's house. If these things are so, you will see at once, dear Friends, that if you are to understand what you read, *you will need to meditate upon it*. Some passages of Scripture lie clear before us—blessed shallows in which the lambs may wade—but there are deeps in which our mind might rather drown herself than swim with pleasure if she came there without caution.

There are texts of Scripture which are made and constructed on purpose to make us think. By this means, among others, our heavenly Father would educate us for Heaven by making us think our way into Divine mysteries. Hence He puts the Word in a somewhat involved form to compel us to meditate upon it before we reach the sweetness of it. He might, you know, have explained it to us so that we might catch the thought in a minute, but He does not please to do so in every case. Many of the veils which are cast over Scripture are not meant to hide the meaning from the *diligent*, but to compel the mind to be active, for oftentimes the diligence

of the heart in seeking to know the Divine mind does the heart more good than the knowledge itself.

Meditation and careful thought exercise us and strengthen the soul for the reception of the yet more lofty Truths of God. I have heard that the mothers who, in the Balearic isles in the old times, wanted to bring their boys up to be good slingers would put their dinners up above them where they could not get at them until they threw a stone and fetched them down. Our Lord wishes us to be good slingers and He puts up some precious Truth in a lofty place where we cannot get it down except by slinging at it and, at last, we hit the mark and find food for our souls! Then have we the double benefit of learning the art of meditation and partaking of the sweet Truth which it has brought within our reach.

We must *meditate*, Brothers and Sisters! These grapes will yield no wine till we tread upon them. These olives must be put under the wheel and pressed, again and again, that the oil may flow. In a dish of nuts, you may know which nut has been eaten because there is a little hole which the insect has punctured through the shell. Just a little hole and then inside there is the living thing eating up the kernel! Well, it is a grand thing to bore through the shell of the letter and then to live inside feeding upon the kernel! I would wish to be such a little worm as that, living within and upon the Word of God, having bored my way through the shell and having reached the innermost mystery of the blessed Gospel. The Word of God is always most precious to the man who most lives upon it!

As I sat, last year, under a wide-spreading beech, I was pleased to mark with prying curiosity the singular habits of that most wonderful of trees which seems to have intelligence about it, while other trees have not. I wondered and admired the beech, but I thought to myself I do not think half as much of this beech tree as yonder squirrel does! I see him leap from branch to branch and I feel sure that he dearly values the old beech tree because he has his home somewhere inside it in a hollow place. These branches are his shelter and those beechnuts are his food. He lives upon the tree! It is his world, his playground, his granary, his home—indeed, it is everything to him—but it is not so to me, for I find my rest and food elsewhere!

With God's Word it is well for us to be like squirrels, living in it and living on it! Let us exercise our minds by leaping from branch to branch in it; find our rest and food in it and make it our all in all! We shall be the people that get the most profit out of it if we make it to be our food, our medicine, our treasury, our armory, our rest, our delight! May the Holy Spirit lead us to do this and make the Word thus precious to our souls. Beloved, I would next remind you that for this end *we shall be compelled to pray*. It is a grand thing to be driven to think, but it is a grander thing to be driven to pray through having been made to think! Am I not addressing some of you who do not read the Word of God? And am I not speaking to many more who do read it, but do not read it with the strong resolve that they will understand it?

I know it must be so. Do you wish to begin to be true readers? Will you, from now on, labor to understand? Then you must get to your knees! You

must cry to God for direction! Who understands a book best? The *author* of it. If I want to ascertain the real meaning of a rather twisted sentence and the author lives near me and I can call upon him, I shall ring at his door and say, "Would you kindly tell me what you mean by that sentence? I have no doubt, whatever, that it is very clear, but I am such a simpleton that I cannot make it out. I have not the knowledge and grasp of the subject which you possess and, therefore, your allusions and descriptions are beyond my range of knowledge. It is quite within your range and commonplace, but it is very difficult to me. Would you kindly explain your meaning to me?"

A good man would be glad to be thus treated and would think it no trouble to unravel his meaning to a candid enquirer. Thus I should be sure to get the correct meaning, for I should be going to the fountainhead when I consulted the author. So, Beloved, the Holy Spirit is with us and when we take His Book and begin to read and want to know what it means, we must ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the meaning. He will not work a miracle, but He will elevate our minds and He will suggest to us thoughts which will lead us on, by their natural relation, the one to the other, till at last we come to the pith and marrow of His Divine Instruction. Seek, then, very earnestly the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for if the very soul of reading is the understanding of what we read, then we must, in prayer, call upon the Holy Spirit to unlock the secret mysteries of the Inspired Word.

If we thus ask the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit, it will follow, dear Friends, that *we shall be ready to use all means and helps towards the understanding of the Scriptures*. When Philip asked the Ethiopian eunuch whether he understood the prophecy of Isaiah, he replied, "How can I, unless some man should guide me?" Then Philip went up and opened to him the Word of the Lord. Some, under the pretense of being taught of the Spirit of God, refuse to be instructed by books or by living men. This is not honoring the Spirit of God—it is a disrespect to Him—for if He gives to some of His servants more light than to others and it is clear He does, then they are bound to give that light to others and to use it for the good of the Church.

But if the other part of the Church refuse to receive that light, to what end did the Spirit of God give it? This would imply that there is a mistake somewhere in the economy of gifts and Graces which is managed by the Holy Spirit. It cannot be so! The Lord Jesus Christ pleases to give more knowledge of His Word and more insight into it to some of His servants than to others and it is ours to joyfully accept the knowledge which He gives in such ways as He chooses to give it. It would be most wicked of us to say, "We will not have the heavenly treasure which exists in earthen vessels. If God will give us the heavenly treasure out of His own hands, but not through the earthen vessel, we will have it. We think we are too wise, too heavenly minded, too spiritual altogether to care for jewels when they are placed in earthen pots. We will not hear anybody and we will not read anything except the Bible itself. Neither will we accept any light ex-

cept that which comes in through a crack in our own roof. We will not see by another man's candle—we would sooner remain in the dark."

Brothers and Sisters, do not let us fall into such folly! Let the light come from God and though a child shall bring it, we will joyfully accept it! If any of His servants, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, shall have received light from Him, behold, "all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" and, therefore, accept the light which God has kindled and ask for Grace that you may turn that light upon the Word of God so that when you read it you may understand it. I do not wish to say much more about this, but I should like to push it home upon some of you. You have Bibles at home, I know. You would not like to be without Bibles. You would think you were heathens if you had no Bibles!

You have them very neatly bound and they are very fine looking volumes—not much thumbed, not much worn and not likely to be so—for they only come out on Sundays for an airing and they lie in lavender with the clean handkerchiefs all the rest of the week. You do not read the Word; you do not search it. So how can you expect to get the Divine blessing? If the heavenly gold is not worth digging for, you are not likely to discover it! Over and over I have told you that the searching of the Scriptures is *not* the way of salvation. The Lord has said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." But, still, the reading of the Word of God often leads, like the hearing of it, to *faith*, and faith brings salvation, for faith comes by hearing and reading is a sort of hearing. While you are seeking to know what the Gospel is, it may please God to bless your souls.

But what poor reading some of you give to your Bibles! I do not want to say anything which is too severe because it may not be strictly true—let your own consciences speak! Still, I make bold to enquire—Do not many of you read the Bible in a very hurried way just a little bit and off you go? Do you not soon forget what you have read and lose what little effect it seemed to have? How few of you are resolved to get at its soul, its juice, its life, its essence and to drink in its meaning! Well, if you do not do that, I tell you, again, your reading is miserable reading, dead reading, unprofitable reading—it is not reading at all! The name would be misapplied! May the blessed Spirit give you repentance touching this thing.

II. But now, secondly and very briefly, let us notice that IN READING WE OUGHT TO SEEK OUT THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF THE WORD. I think that is in my text because our Lord says, "Have you not read?" Then, again, "Have you not read?" And then He says, "If you had known what this means" and the meaning is something very spiritual. The text He quoted was, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," a text out of the Prophet Hosea. Now, the scribes and Pharisees were all for the letter of the sacrifice—the killing of the bullock and so on. They overlooked the *spiritual* meaning of the passage, "I will have *mercy* and not sacrifice," namely that God prefers that we should care for our fellow creatures rather than that we should observe any ceremonies of His Law so as to cause hunger or thirst and, thereby, death, to any of the creatures that His hands have made. They ought to have passed beyond the outward into the spiritual and all our readings ought to do the same.

Notice that this should be the case when we read *the historical passages*. "Have you not read what David did, when he was hungry and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God and did eat the show bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?" This was a piece of *history* and they ought to have read it so as to have found spiritual instruction in it. I have heard very stupid people say, "Well, I do not care to read the historical parts of Scripture." Beloved Friends, you do not know what you are talking about when you say that! I say to you by experience that I have sometimes found even a greater depth of spirituality in the histories than I have in the Psalms.

You will say, "How is that?" I assert that when you reach the inner and spiritual meaning of a history you are often surprised at the wondrous clearness and the realistic force with which the teaching comes home to your soul. Some of the most marvelous mysteries of Revelation are better understood by being set before our eyes in the histories than they are by the verbal declaration of them. When we have the statement to explain the illustration, the illustration expands and clarifies the statement! For instance, when our Lord Himself would explain to us what faith was, He sent us to the history of the bronze serpent—and who is there that has ever read the story of the bronze serpent and has not felt that he has a better idea of faith through the picture of the dying, snake-bitten persons, looking at the serpent of brass and living, than from any description which even Paul has given us, wondrously as he defines and describes?

Never, I pray you, depreciate the historical portions of God's Word, but when you cannot get good out of them, say, "That is my foolish head and my slow heart. O Lord, be pleased to clear my brain and cleanse my soul." When He answers that prayer, you will feel that every portion of God's Word is given by Inspiration and is and must be profitable to you. Cry, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law!" Just the same thing is true with regard to all the ceremonial precepts because the Savior goes on to say, "Have you not read in the Law, how that on the Sabbath the priests in the Temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless?"

There is not a single precept in the old Law but has an inner sense and meaning—therefore do not turn away from Leviticus, or say, "I cannot read these chapters in the Books of Exodus and Numbers. They are all about the tribes and their standards; the stations in the wilderness and the marches; the tabernacle and furniture; about golden utensils and bowls and boards and sockets and precious stones and blue and scarlet and fine linen." No, but look for the *inner* meaning. Make a thorough search, for as in a king's treasure, that which is the most closely locked up and the hardest to come by is the choicest jewel of the treasure, so is it with the Holy Scriptures!

Did you ever go to the British Museum library? There are many books of reference there which the reader is allowed to take down when he pleases. There are other books for which he must write a ticket and he cannot get them without the ticket. But they have certain choice books

which you will not see without a special order and then there is an unlocking of doors, an opening of cases—and there is a watcher with you while you make your inspection. You are scarcely allowed to put your eyes on the manuscript for fear you should blot a letter out by glancing at it! It as such a precious treasure—there is not another copy of it in all the world—and so you cannot get at it easily.

Just so, there are choice and precious doctrines of God's Word which are locked up in such cases as Leviticus or Solomon's Song and you cannot get at them without a deal of unlocking of doors—and the Holy Spirit Himself must be with you, or else you will never come at the priceless treasure! The higher Truths of God are as choicely hidden away as the precious regalia of princes! Therefore search as well as read. Do not be satisfied with a ceremonial precept till you reach its spiritual meaning, for that is true reading. You have not read till you understand the spirit of the matter. It is the same with the *doctrinal* statements of God's Word. I have sorrowfully observed some persons who are very orthodox and who can repeat their creed very glibly and yet the principal use that they make of their orthodoxy is to sit and watch the preacher with the view of framing a charge against him.

He has uttered a single sentence which is judged to be half a hair's breadth below the standard! "That man is not sound! He said some good things, but he is rotten at the core, I am certain of it! He used an expression which was not 18 ounces to the pound." Sixteen ounces to the pound are not enough for these dear Brothers and Sisters of whom I speak—they must have something more and over and above the shekel of the sanctuary! Their knowledge is used as a microscope to magnify trifling differences. I hesitate not to say that I have come across persons who—

"Could a hair divide
Between the west and north-west side,"

in matters of divinity, but who know nothing about the things of God in their real meaning! They have never drank them into their souls but only sucked them up into their mouths to spit them out on others!

The doctrine of election is one thing, but to know that God has predestinated you and to have the fruit of it in the good works to which you are ordained is quite another thing. To talk about the love of Christ; to talk about the Heaven that is provided for His people and such things—all this is very well—but this may be done without any personal acquaintance with them. Therefore, Beloved, never be satisfied with a sound creed, but desire to have it engraved on the tablets of your heart. The doctrines of Grace are good, but the Grace of the doctrines is still better! See that you have it and be not content with the idea that you are instructed until you so understand the doctrine that you have felt its *spiritual* power.

This makes us feel that, in order to come to this, we shall need to feel Jesus present with us whenever we read the Word. Mark that fifth verse, which I would now bring before you as part of my text which I have, up to now, left out. "Have you not read in the Law, how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, that in this place is One greater than the temple." Yes, they

thought much about the letter of the word, but they did not know that He was there who is the Sabbath's Master—man's Lord and the Sabbath's Lord—and Lord of everything! Oh, when you have gotten hold of a creed, or of an ordinance, or anything that is outward in the letter, pray the Lord to make you feel that there is something greater than the printed book and something better than the mere shell of the creed!

There is one Person greater than all of that and to Him we should cry that He may be always with us! O living Christ, make this a living Word to me! Your Word is life, but not without the Holy Spirit. I may know this Book of yours from beginning to end and have it all memorized, from Genesis to Revelation—and yet it may be a dead book to me—and I may be a dead soul! But, Lord, be present! Then will I look up from the Book to the Lord—from the precept to Him who fulfilled it—from the Law to Him who honored it! Then I will look up from the threats to Him who has borne them for me—and from the promise to Him in whom it is, "Yes and amen." Ah, then we shall read the Book very differently!

He is here with me in this chamber of mine—I must not trifle. He leans over me. He puts His finger along the lines. I can see His pierced hands! I will read it as in His Presence. I will read it knowing that He is the Substance of it; that He is the Proof of this Book as well as the Writer of it—the sum of this Scripture as well as the Author of it. *That* is the way for true students to become wise! You will get at the soul of Scripture when you can keep Jesus with you while you are reading. Did you ever hear a sermon which you felt that if Jesus had come into that pulpit while the man was making his oration, He would have said, "Get down, get down! What business have you here? I sent you to preach about Me and you preach about a dozen other things! Go home and learn of Me and then come and speak"?

That sermon which does not lead to Christ, or of which Jesus Christ is not the top and the bottom, is a sort of sermon that will make the devils in Hell laugh, but might make the angels of God weep if they were capable of such emotion! You remember the story I told you of the Welshman who heard a young man preach a very fine sermon—a grand sermon, a high faluting, spread-eagle sermon—and when he had done, he asked the Welshman what he thought of it. The man replied that he did not think anything of it. "And why not?" "Because there was no Jesus Christ in it." "Well," he said, "but my text did not seem to run that way." "Never mind," said the Welshman, "your sermon *ought* to run that way." "I do not see that, however," said the young man.

"No," said the other, "you do not see how to preach, either. This is the way to preach. From every little village in England, it does not matter where it is, there is sure to be a road to London. Though there may not be a road to certain other places, there is certain to be a road to London. Now, from every text in the Bible there is a road to Jesus Christ and the way to preach is just to say, 'How can I get from this text to Jesus Christ?' and then go preaching all the way along it." "Well, but," said the young man, "suppose I find a text that has not got a road to Jesus Christ." "I have preached for 40 years," said the old man, "and I have never found

such a Scripture. But if I ever do find one, I will go over hedge and ditch and I will get to Him, for I will never finish without bringing in my Master."

Perhaps you will think that I have gone a little over hedge and ditch tonight, but I am persuaded that I have not, for the sixth verse comes in here and brings our Lord in most sweetly, setting Him in the very forefront of you Bible readers so that you must not think of reading without feeling that He is there, who is Lord and Master of everything that you are reading—and who shall make these things precious to you if you realize Him in them! If you do not find Jesus in the Scriptures, they will be of small service to you, for what did our Lord, Himself, say? "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, but you will not come unto Me that you might have life"—and therefore your searching comes to nothing! You find no life and remain dead in your sins. May it not be so with us!

III. Lastly, SUCH A READING OF SCRIPTURE as implies the understanding of, the entrance into its spiritual meaning and the discovery of the Divine Person who *is* the spiritual meaning, IS PROFITABLE, for here our Lord says, "If you had known what this means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless." It will save us from making a great many mistakes if we get to understand the Word of God. And among other good things we shall not condemn the guiltless. I have no time to enlarge upon these benefits, but I will just say, putting all together, that the diligent reading of the Word of God with the strong resolve to get at its meaning often begets spiritual life.

We are begotten by the Word of God—it is the instrumental means of regeneration. Therefore love your Bibles. Keep close to your Bibles. You seeking sinners—you who are seeking the Lord—your first business is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but while you are yet in darkness and in gloom, oh, love your Bibles and search them! Take them to bed with you and when you wake up in the morning, if it is too early to go downstairs and disturb the house, get half-an- hour of reading upstairs. Say, "Lord, guide me to that text which shall bless me! Help me to understand how I, a poor sinner, can be reconciled to You."

I remember how, when I was seeking the Lord, I went to my Bible and to Baxter's "Call to the Unconverted," and to Allen's, "Alarm," and Doddridge's, "Rise and Progress," for I said to myself, "I am afraid that I shall be lost, but I will know the reason why. I am afraid I never shall find Christ, but it shall not be for lack of looking for Him." That fear used to haunt me, but I said, "I will find Him if He is to be found. I will read. I will think." There was never a soul that did sincerely seek for Jesus in the Word of God but, by-and-by, has stumbled on the precious Truth of God that Christ was near at hand and did not need any looking for—that He was *really there*—only they, poor blind creatures, were in such a maze that they could not, just then, see Him!

Oh, cling to Scripture! Scripture is not Christ, but it is the silken clue which will lead you to Him! Follow its leadings faithfully. When you have received regeneration and a new life, keep on reading because it will comfort you. You will see more of what the Lord has done for you. You will

learn that you are redeemed, adopted, saved, sanctified. Half the errors in the world spring from people not reading their Bibles! Would anybody think that the Lord would leave any of His dear children to perish if he read such a text as this, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand"? When I read that, I am sure of the doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints!

Read, then, the Word of God, and it will be much for your comfort. It will be for your nourishment, too. It is your food as well as your life. Search it and you will grow strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. It will be for your guidance, also. I am sure those go most right who keep closest to the Book. Oftentimes when you do not know what to do, you will see a text leaping up out of the Bible and saying. "Follow me!" I have seen a promise, sometimes, blaze out before my eyes just like when an illuminated device flames forth upon a public building! One touch of the Holy Spirit and a sentence flashes out in flames!

I have seen a text of Scripture flame forth in that way to my soul—I have known that it was God's Word to me—and I have gone on my way rejoicing. And, oh, you will get a thousand helps out of that wondrous Book if you do but read it! For, understanding the words more, you will prize it more and, as you get older, the Book will grow with your growth and turn out to be a gray-beard's manual of devotion just as it was, before, a child's sweet story book! Yes, it will always be a new Book just as new a Bible as if it were printed yesterday and nobody had ever seen a word of it till now! And yet it will be a deal more precious for all the memories which cluster round it.

As we turn over its pages, how sweetly do we remember passages in our history which will never be forgotten to all eternity, but will stand forever intertwined with gracious promises. Beloved, may the Lord teach us to read His Book of Life which He has opened before us here below, so that we may read our titles clear in that other Book of Love which we have not seen yet, but which will be opened at the Last Great Day. The Lord be with you and bless you. Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.

THE SWIFT CAMELS
NO. 1504

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

We will read a few verses first, and at the close of them you will find the text.

"Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry. And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life. And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and a hundred sheep, beside harts, and roebucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl. For he had dominion over all the region on this side the river, from Tiphsah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon. And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen. And those officers provided victual for King Solomon, and for all that came unto King Solomon's table, every man in his month: they lacked nothing. Barley also and straw for the horses and camels brought they unto the place where the officers were, every man according to his charge."
1 Kings 4:20-28.

The last words are the text for this occasion. From the whole passage you will see that the kingdom of Israel under the sway of Solomon was a fair type of the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps it most exactly describes His future dominion, in the long-expected glory of the latter days. The present state of the church may be compared to the reign of David, splendid with victories, but disturbed with battles. But there are better days to come, days in which the kingdom shall be extended and become more manifest—and then the Lord Jesus Christ shall be even more conspicuously seen as the Solomon of the kingdom, "who shall have dominion from sea to sea." Yet even now, as "we that have believed do enter into rest," so do we also enter into the richest provision which is made in the covenant of grace, even at this present time, and I may say of all who have come under the sway of Christ, that we dwell in a region of *peace*, seated every man under his vine and fig tree and none making us afraid. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," and, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "The peace of God which passes all understanding" does keep our heart and mind by Jesus Christ. Israel under Solomon had abundance as well as peace. What says the historian? They were "as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry." It is said that there was such plenty in the land in Solomon's time that gold was of no more value than silver

and silver became of little more value than iron, and as for the other metals, they were little accounted of. So common had precious metals become that they were scarcely precious any longer, they were so plentiful. The whole land flowed with milk and honey and the people rejoiced and were glad. Certainly the Lord Jesus Christ has brought His people into a state of the greatest plenty, for "all things are yours; whether things present, or things to come; or life, or death; all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

What plenty must that man have to whom the Lord has said, "No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly"! "Whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." He has given us *carte blanche* in prayer. He has put into our hands the keys of His treasury and has bidden us take what we will. He has said, "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." And He has added, "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." If we have not, it is "because we ask not, or because we ask amiss."

So, too, we dwell in a kingdom which is ruled with *wisdom*. It is said of Solomon in this chapter that he had wisdom and understanding exceeding much and largeness of heart, even as the sand on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country and all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Is not this also our honor and privilege? Behold, this day the Lord Jesus Christ is "made unto us wisdom." "We have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things" while we dwell in Him, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." "If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine." "All your children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children." Hence we dwell under a rule of wisdom, which wisdom imparts itself to each one of us according to his capacity to receive it, yes, even to those whose experience is but shallow, "to teach the young men wisdom, and the babes knowledge and discretion." "If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God that gives to all men liberally and upbraids not."

Israel had a king who was full of *power*. Solomon had squadrons of horse and chariots of war and he was so strong that the kings of the earth dared not come into conflict with him, but paid him tribute. As for our King, He has better forces than horses and chariots of war, for He has but to speak to His Father and He will presently send Him 20 legions of angels. All power is delivered unto Him in heaven and in earth. The fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him for the defense and help of His people, and if you will but open your eyes, you shall see horses of fire and chariots of fire round about your Lord. Hosts of angels are ascending and descending upon the Son of Man and all heaven is in motion for the purposes of God in Christ Jesus. Not an angel stands still beneath the sway of Christ, but each one either ascends or descends to do his Master's bidding. Talk of mighty princes—He is the Prince of the kings of the earth, the "blessed and only Potentate," to whom belongs rule over all principalities and powers. I might go on with the parallel, but that is not the object of my discourse.

The great kingdom of Solomon was managed by a well-appointed body of officers and certain persons were set over each province, who, among other duties, had to provide for king Solomon's table and stable. The table was very sumptuously furnished, as you saw in the reading, and in the stable stood horses of war and also swift camels which were used in the same manner as our modern post-horses—to carry messages rapidly from one station to another. These swift horses and camels were made to run from town to town with the royal mandates and thus the whole country was kept in speedy communication with the capital. Appointed officers were bound to provide for these horses and camels and all else that concerned the king's business, and my subject at this time will illustrate the likeness between this arrangement and the methods of our Lord's kingdom.

I. First we shall note that EACH OF SOLOMON'S OFFICERS HAD A CHARGE. The text says, "Every man according to his charge." We have officers about modern courts who may be highly ornamental, but when you have said that, there is very little else to add. On high days and holidays they wear many decorations and glitter in their stars and garters and sumptuous garments, but what particular charge they fulfill, it is beyond my power to say. *In Solomon's court all his officers had a service to carry out*, "every man according to his charge." It is exactly so in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we are truly His, He has called us to some work and office and He wills us to discharge that office diligently. We are not to be gentlemen-at-ease, but men-at-arms, not loiterers, but laborers, not glittering spangles, but burning and shining lights.

It is an exceeding glory to be the lowest servant of King Jesus. It is more honor to be a dishwasher in Christ's kitchen than to be a peer of the realm. The lowliest position that can be occupied in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, if any can be lowly in such a service, has a touch of divine glory about it and if we rightfully discharge it, though it is only to wash the saints' feet, we partake in the honor of our Master, who Himself did not disdain to do the like. But no man is put in any office in the church that he may merely be ornamental. We are set in our places with an end and design, every man according to his charge—every woman according to *her* charge. My dear brother, you do not occupy the post of a minister or a pastor that you may be respected, but that you may "adorn the doctrine of God, your Savior, in all things." You are not, my dear brother, ordained to be an elder or a deacon in a church that our Lord may put honor upon you, though He does put honor upon you in it, but that you may bring glory to God—that the people may see the grace of God in you and may magnify God in you. Churches were not made for ministers, but ministers for churches. We who are officers in the church are not ordained for our own sakes, but for the people's sake and we should always recollect that fact and live with it before our eyes. Dear friend, if you are called to teach in the school, if you are called to visit from house to house, or to act as a City Missionary or a Bible Woman, you have work to do and you must do it well, or render a sorrowful account at the last. Office is not given to you that you may get credit by it and have the hon-

or of filling it, but that you may do real service to your Lord and Master Jesus Christ. No servant of Christ can be faithful if he regards that title as one of barren honor involving no responsibility. If we would be servants and officers under our great King, we must bow our necks to the yoke and not imagine that it will suffice to bind burdens upon other men's shoulders and act as lookers-on ourselves. It is said of Job's cattle, that "the oxen were plowing and the asses were feeding beside them," but in our Lord's field, we must all be oxen and steadily keep to the furrow.

Those who served Solomon were officers under a strict king, for such was his wisdom that he would not tolerate unfaithfulness in any office. He chose the best men and so long as he retained them, he meant business and expected prompt attention. If they did not do their duty, he did his and sent them packing. It is very much so in the church of Jesus Christ. I am not speaking as if the children of God could perish, but I do say this—in the service of Christ if you are not a faithful servant you will soon have to make room for another. You may be laid aside by sickness and then you will have suffering instead of serving, or you may be made to drop into the rear rank and go behind and weep in sorrow because you did not faithfully do your duty in the front. Recollect that text, "The Lord your God is a jealous God," and rest assured that our Lord Jesus Christ is like His Father—He will have the diligent obedience of His servants and their faithful zeal—or else He will chastise them and take away their commissions. "Be you clean," says He, "that bear the vessels of the Lord," for He will be had in reverence of them that are about Him—and unholy servants and unfaithful servants shall soon find that their Master can do without them. Many a minister has had to come away from a place of advantage because he has not zealously used it to win souls and lead the people on to the holy war. I do not doubt that many rising officers have been sent back to the ranks because the Commander-in-Chief could not have patience with them any longer in their positions. They were removed because they discouraged their fellow soldiers and checked the progress of the campaign. Do not suppose that our Lord Jesus Christ is any less strict in His discipline than Moses, for love is always severe towards those it highly favors. I greatly question the love of that man who can tolerate unchastity in his wife—certainly the Husband of the church will not do so. The love of our Lord Jesus is of so fervent a character that He cannot bear a divided heart or a negligent walk in any of us. There is a text which some Christian people do not like and so they cut the heart out of it, "*Our* God is a consuming fire." They say, "God, out of Christ, is a consuming fire." The text does not say so. It speaks of "Our God," and that means our covenant God, our God *in Christ* and it is God in Christ Jesus who is a consuming fire. Beware how you deal with Him, for while His love is strong as death, His jealousy is cruel as the grave, and if our hearts and motives and aims in His service once become divided, it will be as great a crime as if one of Solomon's servants should have been playing into the hands of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Solomon would have taken care that a man who had two lords should not have him for one of them. None of us can serve two masters—certainly, if Christ is one

of them, He will be the only one. A divided heart is abhorrence to the loving Savior and we must not insult Him with it.

The officers of Solomon were also obliged to recollect that the *orderly working of the whole system* depended upon each one of them. That is to say, Solomon had so arranged it that there was a certain troop of horses in a certain town and the appointed officer must see to their fodder—barley and straw were to be on the spot in full quantity for the horses at that particular depot. It would not have done to send it anywhere else and if an officer had failed to supply his department, the horses must have starved and the system been thrown out of gear. Now, in any well-arranged Christian church, a Christian who is not faithful to his charge little knows what mischief he does, but as far as he can, he puts the whole machine out of gear and apart from the interposing mercy and supreme wisdom of Christ, he would throw the whole economy of the Lord's house into disorder. Brethren and sisters we think when we neglect a part of our service that it ends there, but it does not. A father neglects his duty to his children—there is mischief to the child, but it goes further—that child in later life spreads the evil by his example and transmits it to his descendants. Ay, to his children's children after him. A Christian man in a church keeps in the background when he should be in the front, or he comes to the front when he should be in the rear, and this is just the upsetting of the whole business so that affairs cannot move smoothly. The little church cannot prosper because an influential member is where he ought not to be. In a great house, the servants must keep their places and if the cook will persist in doing the chambermaid's duties and does not prepare the meals, everything is in a muddle. And if, on the other hand, the maid who has to clean the rooms neglects that duty, but must needs be in the kitchen, there will be no comfort either by day or by night. You can all see the bearing of this upon a Christian church.

To change the figure, a church is like a house and if the windows are put where the doors should be, or if what should make the roof is laid on the floor, the house is out of order. To be "fitly framed together" is the true condition of the Lord's house. The church is also compared to the body. If the eye should transfer itself to the foot, or if the ear should move to the hand, or if the hand should take the place of the foot, or the foot should attempt to do the work of the mouth, our comely frames would become monstrosities. So it must be in the system of the church of Jesus Christ if His arrangements are broken through. Under God everything depends upon each child of God having his "charge" and looking well to it. If he does not look well to his own department, the Christian man does damage to others as well as to himself.

In Solomon's kingdom it came to pass that *the spirit of the king infused itself into all his officers* and therefore the country was well governed. Beloved, I pray that it may be so with this church and with all the churches of Jesus Christ that the Spirit of our great King may infuse itself into us all. Nothing makes men fight like having a hero for a leader. When Cromwell came to the front, nobody was afraid.

Away went the cavaliers like chaff before the wind when once he was present. And surely, when our glorious Master, the Captain of our salvation, the Standard Bearer among ten thousand, is seen to be in the midst of a church, then everything goes well and we all fight with confidence and daring. One man sometimes seems to have the power of pervading thousands of other men. His spirit appears to govern, to move, to stir the hearts of his fellow men till the man lives in them all. And so is it supremely with the Lord Christ. We live in Him and He lives in us. If we are all moved by the Spirit which dwells in Jesus—the Spirit of love, of self-denial, of consuming zeal and of ardor—then all will be done gloriously. If we imitate His consecration, His prayerfulness, His boldness, and His gentleness, what a troop shall we make and how well will our Solomon's kingdom be administered!

Only one more thought here. *When Solomon's kingdom came to mischief it was through one of his officers*. You recollect that when Solomon died, Jeroboam split the kingdom in twain and he was a runaway servant. Whenever a church comes to ruin, we grieve to confess that it is generally through its own officers. I fear it is more often the ministers than any other persons. The great heresies which have infested the church have not sprung from the mass of the people, but from certain famous leaders. And at this day, the heart of our churches, I believe, is infinitely more sound than the ministry. I wish it were not so, but I cannot conceal my fears. When our Lord was betrayed, it was not by private followers such as Mary Magdalene, Zaccheus, or Joseph of Arimathaea—but by Judas, the treasurer of the College of Apostles. It was an apostle who sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver. Still the fault is equally grievous if it is committed by the lowest officer. As I have already said, we are all servants—we are all clothed with responsibilities and we can, if the Holy Spirit shall leave us to it, do grievous damage—more damage than the outside world can ever accomplish. Let the raging crowd surround Zion's walls. Let them cast up their banks and seek to shoot their arrows there. But lo, the virgin daughter of Zion has shaken her head at her foes and laughed them to scorn. But when the traitor comes within—when it is written, "Judas also which betrayed Him knew the place"—then is the Master betrayed in the garden where He resorted for prayer. When from the heart of the church there springs a serpent, even her head must be stung. Let the question go round, "Lord, is it I?" And may God of His grace grant that none of us may ever betray our charge and so bring damage to the glorious cause and kingdom of our blessed King.

II. Our second head is somewhat like the first. We now note that EACH MAN WAS BOUND TO ACT ACCORDING TO HIS CHARGE—"Every man according to his charge." The officers were bound to obey their orders, first, as to *matter*. Certain of them had to provide fat oxen for Solomon's table and others had to see that the roebucks were hunted and that the fowls were hunted for the same purpose, while others were commissioned to provide the barley and the straw for the horses and the camels. As I have already said, if they had gone out of place—if the man who had to provide the barley for the horses had fed the chickens with it

and if the officer who was bound to hunt the roebucks had occupied himself with carting the straw, there would have been great confusion. And so, dear brother, when you will not do what you were evidently meant to do and are quite able to do, but must needs attempt something quite out of your range, all goes amiss. Observe your own body—if your ear were to have a feeling that it ought to eat instead of hear, the mouth would be interfered with and the feeding of the frame would be very badly done. The eye is a very serviceable member, but if it persisted in refusing to see and must needs take to hearing, we should be run over in the streets. Each member has its own office in the body and must attend to its own work and not to the office of another. Dear friend, have you found out what you can do—what the Lord has fitted you to do and what He has blessed you in doing? Then keep to it and do it better and better and by no means complain of your vocation. Do not find fault with others whose work differs from your own. The eye would be very foolish if it should say, "Do not tell me about that frivolous member, the ear—it is of no use—it only knows what it is told and it is so blind that it could not see a house if it were within a yard of it, nor even a mountain a mile high." Equally idle would it be if the ear should say, "Do not tell me about the mouth. It is a selfish organ, always wanting to be fed. It is good for nothing, for it cannot hear, and if a cannon were fired off close to it, it would not perceive it." Neither may the mouth say, "That roving foot is always running about. Why does it not work like the hand?" Nor may the hand find fault with the tongue because it boasts great things and does nothing. There would be sad confusion in the body if such a spirit prevailed. But the hand keeps to its work and even there is a subdivision of service. The little finger plays a part which the thumb cannot fulfill, and there is something for the thumb which the forefinger cannot do. So should it be in the church of God—you should each find out what you can do and then seek, God the Holy Spirit helping you, to do that to the very best of your ability out of love to Jesus.

Observe that with Solomon it was "every man according to his charge" as to *measure,* for if a man had charge of a stable where there were two thousand horses, he had to send in more barley and straw than the officer who superintended a smaller stable of only five hundred horses. The purveyor who was ordered to supply Solomon's table with fat bullocks had to send more than he who fed the tables of the inferior officers. Note this well, for certain of us are bound to do much more than others. Some of us bear heavy responsibilities and if we were to say, "I shall do no more than anybody else. I need not overburden myself," we should be unfit to occupy the position to which God has called us. Dear friends, I am not afraid that any of you will do too much for Jesus Christ, but I would like you to try. Just see now whether you can be too ardent, too self-sacrificing, too zealous, or too consecrated. It is a pity that such a thing should not be attempted. I have never known anybody who could accuse himself of so rare a crime. Oh, no, we all feel that all we can do, and more, is well deserved by our blessed Master who has given us our charge. Do not forget that you who are fathers ought to be better men

than those single men who have no children to look up to them and to copy their example. You who are large employers ought to be better men because your workmen will watch how you live. You who have talents and abilities ought to be more active than those who have none, for five talents call for more interest than one. Do remember the rule of proportion. If you have five talents and your brother has only one, you may do twice as much as he does and yet fall short. He is faithful with his small capital, but your proportion is five times as much and therefore twice as much falls short of what is expected from you. Many a servant girl gives her four penny-piece to the offering and if the same proportion were carried out among those who are wealthy, gold would not be so rare a metal in the Lord's treasury. A tithe may be too much for some, but a half might not be enough for another. Let it be, "Every man according to his charge," as to measure as well as to matter.

"Every man according to his charge," applied to *place,* for if the servant who had to send in barley for the camels to Jerusalem had sent it off to Joppa, or if the Joppa man had sent all his fodder to Jericho, there would have been considerable trouble and outcry in the stables. And if the fatted beef and the venison for Solomon's table, when he stopped in the house of the forest of Lebanon, had been sent over to his other house on Mount Zion, the king would have had his table ill supplied. Some men are not satisfied to serve God in their proper place—they must run fifty miles off, or a hundred, before they can work. Is this right? I remember a little text in the Proverbs, "As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place." There is a sphere for every star which decks the sky and a blade of grass for every drop of dew which spangles the mead. Oh that everyone would keep his place. Very much depends on position. Statues upon a building may look magnificent and seem to be in fine proportion, but if those statues were one night to say, "We do not like standing up here in this exposed place. We will walk down and stand in the public square," you would see at once that the artist never meant them to be there, for they would be out of proportion in their new position. So a man is a man when he keeps his niche, but he may be a nobody if he leaves it. Many a man have I known who has done nothing till he has found his place and then he has astonished his friends. I find it so with young men entering the ministry—a brother has not succeeded, in fact, he has been an utter failure in his first position and yet, when God has opened the proper door for him, he has done marvels. Why did he not succeed before? Because he was out of his place. The best thing applied to the purpose for which it is not suited is a mere waste, and the best man in an unsuitable position may unwittingly be a hindrance to the cause he loves. Solomon's officer would have been very foolish if he had sent his barley down to Dan when it was his duty to supply Beersheba. Find your place, good brother, and do not be in a hurry to move. He who keeps in a shop in a dozen towns in a dozen years will at the end look in vain for a shop which will keep him. The spirit of roving tends to poverty. Those who are eager to move because they imagine that they will leave their troubles behind them are much deceived, for these are found

everywhere. You may soon get into some such predicament as Jonah, who thought that all would be well if he could avoid Nineveh trials, but he had forgotten the troubles of being aboard ship in a storm. I do not suppose he ever ran away to Tarshish again. That one experiment satisfied him and I hope you will profit by his experience. Do not try running away on your own account, for if you endeavor to escape your Lord's hard work, I would have you remember that the sea is quite as tempestuous now as ever, and whales are fewer now than in Jonah's day—and not at all so likely to carry a live man to shore. Keep your place, "every man according to his charge."

Once more, every man was to act according to his charge as to *time*, because the passage speaks of each one "in his month." If the January man had taken care to provide for Solomon's table in February, what would have happened? There was a man for February and there would have been two supplies for one month, but none for the first weeks of the year. If the August officer had kept back till September the corn which was wanted by the horses and the camels in August, what would the poor creatures have done during that month? While the barley was coming, the steeds would have been starving. In serving Christ, there is a great deal in being up to time, punctual in everything. Not tomorrow, brother—not tomorrow, that is somebody else's day—today is the day for you. Up and do the day's work. Some soul is to be won for Christ, some truth to be vindicated, some deed of kindly charity to be worked, some holy prevalent prayer to be offered and it is to be done at once. Or ever tomorrow's sun has risen, see that you have carried out your charge, for time in reference to these solemn matters is life. Promptness we always admire in responsible persons. If they have any public duty to do, we cannot endure to see men leaving matters in arrears, to be done by-and-by, or never done at all. If Jesus Christ "straightway" did this and that, as Mark always takes care to tell us He did, let us imitate His promptness and serve God without the sluggard's delays.

III. I close with the third point, that EACH MAN WOULD RECEIVE SUPPLIES "ACCORDING TO HIS CHARGE." I do not quite understand the precise and definite bearing of my text. Surely it means not only that one set of officers was to send in the barley, but that another set of officers was to receive the barley and the straw in proportion to the number of horses and camels. "Barley also and straw for the horses and camels brought they unto the place where the officers were, every man according to his charge." That is to say, according to the number of horses to be provided for, such was the amount of corn and of straw that was sent in for their food.

So I gather, first, that concerning the servants of our Lord Jesus Christ *a great charge from Him is a guarantee of great supplies*. There is something very comfortable about this as to temporals. Some declare that God sends mouths and does not send bread, or at least they say He sends the mouths to one house and the bread to another. If it is so, those who get too much bread should send it round to their neighbors. Yet I note that somehow where there are mouths, bread does come. It of-

ten amazes me, I must confess, and it brings tears to my eyes when I see it and indeed it is perfectly wonderful that poor widows with a swarm of little children feed them in some fashion. The poor woman comes to the Orphanage about a little boy and she does not like to part with him, but want compels, and when we have said, "My good woman, how many children had you when your husband died?" she has replied, "Seven, sir, and none of them able to earn a penny." "You have been fighting your way alone these three or four years, how have you done it?" "Ah, sir," she answers, "God only knows. I cannot tell you." No, no and there are many of God's dear children who could not tell you how they lived, but they have lived and their children, too. The Lord leaves them a great charge and in His own way He sends a supply. Most of us have found that if our King sends us the camels, He sends us the barley. It has been so in my case in the matter of our two hundred and fifty orphan children at Stockwell. Our gracious God has always sent us enough and the boys have known no lack. And when we receive another two hundred and fifty children, and have girls as well as boys, I feel sure our heavenly Father will provide for them all. I hope you will all recollect that the provision must come instrumentally through the Lord's own people and much of it through the readers and hearers of the sermons, but come it will. If my Lord puts more camels into my stable, I shall look for the corresponding increase in the barley and the straw; for I am quite sure He will send it. When I think of my dear friend, Mr. George Muller, with two thousand and fifty orphan children and nothing to depend upon, as they say, but just prayer and faith, I rejoice greatly. He never has a fear or a want and is as restful as if he were an incarnate Sabbath. If we had twenty thousand orphans to feed, our Master is quite able to supply them all. He feeds the universe and we may well trust Him. If we have a simple, childlike faith, we shall find that a great charge is a guarantee of a great supply—"Every man according to his charge."

As it is in temporals, so is it in grace. When God gives a man a few people to look after, He gives him grace enough, and when He gives him ten times that number, He gives him more of His Holy Spirit. And when He gives him a hundred times that number, He increases the divine anointing. If the Lord sends you a little trial, dear brother, you shall have grace enough, and if He sends you a huge trial, you shall still have grace enough. If He gives you some little work to do in the back settlements, your strength shall be as your day, and if He allots you a great charge in the front of the enemy's fire, you shall not come short. "Every man according to his charge." You will not have a farthing's worth of grace over. You shall never have so much that you can boast about it and talk of having lived for months without sinning and the like kind of nonsense. You shall be forced to feel that when you have done all, you are an unprofitable servant. Never in my life have I had in the morning left from yesterday's manna as much as would cover a three penny-piece. I have always been so hungry that I have had to devour all I could get then and there. I have lived from hand to mouth—the hand has been that of my Lord, which is ever full, and the mouth has been mine and it has been

always gaping for more. When in my ministry I have had a double quantity of food, I have had a double number to feed upon it. The Lord's grace has been sufficient for my necessities, but it has never left me room for glorying in self. Still, take it as a sure fact that a great charge is a guarantee of a great supply.

Now we will turn the truth over and say that *a great supply indicates a great charge*. O that some would think of this! A man has grown richer than he used to be. Brother, with more barley and more straw you ought to keep more camels. I mean that God did not send that corn for the mice to destroy, but He means it to be eaten. When God gives men money or means of any sort, they ought to feel that they are His stewards and must use all they have for their Master. If you do not use it, but hoard it, it will happen to you as once befell a little brook. It had always been running, rippling along, rolling its gladsome stream down to the river and thus ever emptying itself, but remaining ever full. This little brook became greedy and said, "I have been too extravagant. I have made no provision for the hot summer weather. I always give all I get—it keeps running through me in one perpetual stream and none of it stays. This must be altered. I will make a great store and become full." So there came a bank across it—it was dammed up and the waters kept on swelling and rising. After a little time, the water turned green and foul. It became encumbered with all sorts of weeds, was the haunt of all manner of creeping things, and gave forth an offensive smell. It became a very great nuisance to the villagers and they called in the sanitary commissioners to get rid of it, for it was breeding fever. How now, you once sparkling brook! What an end has come to your bright and cheerful life. Do you see the drift of the parable? Recollect that in Palestine there is one sea which always receives and never gives out. What is its name? The Dead Sea. It must always be the Dead Sea while this is its character. If they were to cut a channel into the great ocean, to let its waters run away, it might grow sweet, but otherwise it never can do so. The man who much receives but nothing gives is dead while he lives. He who has great receipts should reckon that he has a great charge and act accordingly. When a brother has great talents, great possessions, great influence—when he is great at anything—by God's grace let him say, "God requires great things of me; for to whom much is given, him shall much be required." It is a law of the kingdom of Christ—a law which He will take care is always carried out.

So I finish up with this. Somebody will say, "I could almost wish that I could escape from the responsibility of being a servant of Christ." Dear brother, take note of these two or three facts.

You cannot better your circumstances as a servant of Christ by diminishing your charge. If you say, "I shall not attempt quite so much," you will not improve your circumstances by that course, for if you diminish work, the Lord will diminish the strength. Our great Solomon will stop some of the supplies if you have fewer camels to feed and so you will be no better off. If you have to keep six, He will give you provision for six. If

you take to keeping three, He will only give you supplies for three and you will be poorer rather than richer.

Neither can you improve your circumstances by entirely and only increasing the supply. For if you receive more straw and barley, certainly our Solomon will send you more camels. When you have more strength, you will have more trials. When God's children do not discharge their service with the means which He entrusts to them, He frequently lets them take shares in a "limited liability company," which is the same thing as throwing your money into the river. Or He leaves them to become shareholders in a breaking bank with unlimited catastrophe as its capital and this is more terrible still. It often happens to a man who has scraped and saved and stinted the cause of Christ, that in his later years he is in straits and he cries to himself, "It is all gone and I wish I had used it better before it went. It would have been far better to give it to the Lord than to see the lawyers devour it." Ah, your sin has found you out. Your Master could not trust you and so He has taken away His goods from you and now you wish that you had behaved yourself. Let us take warning from such bad managers and let us see that as our charge is so we cry for supplies, and that as the supplies come, we use them wisely.

Everything for Jesus, the glorious Solomon of our hearts, the Beloved of our souls! Life for Jesus! Death for Jesus! Time for Jesus! Eternity for Jesus! Hand and heart for Jesus! Brain and tongue for Jesus! Night and day for Jesus! Sickness or health for Jesus! Honor or dishonor for Jesus! Shame or glory for Jesus! Everything for Jesus, "every man according to his charge." So may it be! Amen.

[The original title of this sermon was *The Dromedaries*.]

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

"And call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."
Psalm 50:15.

THE Lord God in this Psalm is described as having a controversy with His people. He summons heaven and earth to hear Him while He utters His reproof. This indictment will show us what it is that the Lord sets the greatest store by, for His complaint will evidently touch upon that point. We are informed most plainly that the Lord had no controversy with His people concerning the externals of His worship. He does not reprove them for their sacrifices and burnt offerings. He even speaks of these symbolic sacrifices and says, "I will take no bullock out of your house, nor he goats out of your folds." His complaint was not concerning visible ceremony and outward ritual and this shows that He does not attach so much importance to outward things as most men suppose Him to do. His complaint was concerning inner worship, soul worship, and spiritual worship. His reproof was that His people did not offer thanksgiving and prayer and that their conduct was so inconsistent with their professions that clearly their hearts went not with their outward formalities. This was the essence of the charge against them. They were faulty, not in visible religiousness, but in the internal and vital part of godliness—they had no true communion with God though they kept up the appearance of it. We see then that heart worship is the most precious thing in the sight of the Lord. We learn what is that priceless jewel which must be set in the gold ring of religion if the Lord is to accept it.

Nor is it hard to see why it is so, for it is plain that if a man had kept the ritual of the old law to the very full, he still might not be in sincerity a worshipper of God at all. He might drive whole flocks of his sheep to the temple door for sacrifice and yet he might feel no spiritual reverence for the Most High, for it has been proven times without number that the most careful and zealous attention to external ceremonies is quite consistent with the absolute absence of any true apprehension of God and hearty love for Him. Habit may keep a man outwardly religious long after his mind has forgotten the Lord. Yes, the conscious lack of inward and vital grace may drive a man to a more intense zeal in formalities in order to conceal his defect. It is written, "Israel has forsaken his Maker and builds temples." You would think if he built temples he must recognize his God, but it was not so. Within those buildings, he hid himself from Him who dwells not in temples made with hands. Beneath the folds of

vestments, men smother up their hearts so that they come not to God. Fine music drowns the cry of the contrite soul and the smoke of incense becomes a cloud which conceals the face of the Most High.

Great sacrifices might often be an offering made to a rich man's personal pride. No doubt certain kings that gave great contributions to the house of God did it to show their wealth or to display their generosity, somewhat in the spirit of Jehu, who said to Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, "Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord." A great sacrifice might be nothing more than a bid for popularity and so an offering to selfishness and vanity. With such sacrifices God would not be well pleased. Alas! how easy it is to defile the worship of God and nullify its quality till, like milk which is soured, it may be utterly rejected. I am sure you know right well that it may be so in the simplest form of public worship such as our own. Bare as is our mode of service, there is room for self. Singers may lift up their sweet voices that others may hear how charmingly they sing. Ministers may preach with graceful eloquence that they may be admired as men who are models of exquisite speech. Believers may even pray devoutly that their fellow Christians may see how gracious they are. Alas! this blight of self may come into any and every part of outward service and turn the worship of God into an occasion for self-glorification. Thus does Belshazzar drink out of the vessels of the sanctuary, while the buyers and sellers turn the temple into a den of thieves. Wonder not, therefore, that God looks with but scant satisfaction—I was about to say with bare tolerance—upon the abundance of outward worship, because He sees how easy it is for it not to be His worship at all, but a mere exhibition of man's carnal glorying.

Many, too, have performed outward worship with a view to merit somewhat of the Lord—they have supposed that God would be their debtor if they were zealous in furnishing His altars and frequenting His courts. If they have not put it in that coarse form, it has certainly come to that, that they hoped to be held worthy of particular regard if they were zealous above others. Some have superstitiously dreamed of obtaining prosperity in this world by observing holy days and seasons, and many more have hoped to have it set to their account at the last great day that they have heaped up the offertory or given a painted window or built an almshouse or attended daily service year by year. Now, what is this but an offering to selfishness? The man performs pious and charitable deeds for his own good and this motive flavors the whole of his life so that the taint of self is in every particle of it. The Jew might offer bullocks or sheep for his own salvation and what would this be but the manifest worship of self? It brought no glory to God and did not mean His praise. Wonder not, therefore, if the Lord speaks thus slightingly of it all.

What the Lord missed in His people was not temple rites and offerings, for in these they abounded, but He missed the fruit of the lips giving glory to His name. He missed first their thankfulness, for He says unto them, "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay your vows unto the Most High." And next He missed in them that holy, trustful confidence which would lead them to resort to Him in the hour of their need—hence He

says, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.” Brethren and sisters, have you failed in these two precious things? Do you fail in thankfulness? The Lord multiplies His favors to many of us—do we multiply our thanks? The earth gives back a flower for every dewdrop—are we alike responsive to plenteous mercy? Do the bounties of His providence and the favors of His grace teach us how to sing psalms unto the Ever-Merciful? Do we not too often permit divine mercies to come and go in silence as if they were not worthy of a thankful word? Have we a time and season for God’s praise? Is it not too often huddled into a corner? We have a closet for our prayers, but no chamber for our praises. Do we make it a point in life that whatever is neglected, the praises of God shall have full expression? Do you, my brethren, in everything give thanks? Do you carry out to the full this sentence—“From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same the Lord’s name is to be praised”?

May I also venture to ask whether you pay your vows to Him? In times of sickness and sorrow you say, “Gracious Lord, if I am recovered, or if I am brought out of this condition, I will be more believing, I will be more consecrated. I will devote myself only to You, O my Savior, if You will now restore me.” Are you mindful of these vows? It is a delicate question, but I put it pointedly because a vow unredeemed is a wound in the heart. If you have failed in your grateful acknowledgments, remember that these are the things which God looks for more than for any ceremonial observance or religious service. He would have you bring your daily thankfulness and your faithful vows to Him, for He is worthy to be praised and it is meet that unto Him should the vow be performed.

It is not to thankfulness, however, that I am going to ask attention this morning so much as to the other sacrifice—namely, prayer in the day of trouble. Let me say at the outset that I am struck with wonder that God should regard it as being one of the most acceptable forms of worship—that we should call upon Him in the day of trouble. Such prayers seem to be all for ourselves and to be forced from us by our necessities, and yet such is His condescending love that He puts them down as being choice sacrifices and places them side by side with the thankful paying of our vows. He tells us that our call for His help in the hour of distress will be more acceptable to Him than the oblations which His own law ordained, more pleasing than all the bullocks and rams which liberal princes could present at His altars. Be not backward then, beloved, to cry to Him in your hour of need. If it pleases Him and profits you, you ought not to want a single word from me to excite you to do what seems so natural, so comforting, so beneficial. Are our cries of anguish and our appeals of hope acceptable to God? Then let us cry mightily unto Him. Are any of you in the black waters? Call upon Him. Are you in the hungry desert? Call upon Him. Are you in the lions’ dens and among the mountains of the leopards? Call upon Him. Whether you are in peril as to your souls or your bodies, do not hesitate to pray at once, but say to yourself, “Why should I linger? Let me tell the Lord of my grief right speedily, for if He

counts my call a worthy sacrifice, assuredly I will present it with my whole heart."

Let us look to this matter and see the value of this form of adoration. Our first head shall be that *Calling upon God in the day of trouble brings honor to God in the very act.* Secondly, it brings honor to God *in His answer*, for there is coupled with such a prayer the blessed assurance, "I will deliver you." And thirdly, it brings honor to God *in our later conduct*, for it is written, "You shall glorify Me."

I. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, enable us to see that CALLING UPON GOD IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE BRINGS GLORY TO HIM IN ITSELF. I beg you to notice the time that is specially mentioned. Calling upon God at any time honors Him, but calling upon Him in the day of trouble has a special mark set against it as peculiarly pleasing to the Lord because it yields peculiar glory to His name.

Note then, first, that when a man calls upon God sincerely in the day of trouble, *it is a truthful recognition of God.* Outward devotions suppose a God, but prayer in the day of trouble proves that God is a fact to the supplicant. The tried pleader has no doubt that there is a God, for he is calling upon Him when mere form can yield no comfort. He wants practical matter-of-fact help and he so realizes God that he treats Him as real and appeals to Him to be his Helper. God is not a mere name or a superstition to him—he is sure that there is a God, for he is calling upon Him in an hour when a farce would be a tragedy and an imposture would be a bitter mockery. The afflicted supplicant perceives that God is near him, for he would not call upon one who was not within hearing. He has a perception of God's omnipotence by which He can help and of God's goodness which will lead Him to help. You can see that he believes in God's hearing prayer, for a man does not call upon one whom he judges to be a deaf deity or upon one whose palsied hand is never outstretched to help. The man who calls upon God in the day of trouble evidently possesses a real and sincere belief in the existence of God, in His personality, in His power, in His condescension and in His continual active interposition in the affairs of men, otherwise he would not call upon Him. Many of your beliefs in God are a sort of religious parade and not the actual walk of faith. Many have a holiday faith which enables them to repeat the creed and say with the congregation, "I believe in God the Father Almighty," but in very deed, they have no such belief. Do you, my hearer, believe in God the Father Almighty when you are in trouble? Do you go to the great Father at such times and expect help from Him? This is real work and not hypocritical play. There is solid metal about the faith which follows the Lord in the dark, cries to Him when the rod is in His hand, and looks to Him, not for sentimental comforts in prosperity, but for substantial help in bitter adversities. What we want is facts and trial is the test of fact. Sharp furnace work does away with mere pretense and this is one of its great uses, for that grace which, like the salamander, lives in the fire, is grace indeed.

I say again that very many publicly declared creed-faiths are mere shams which like the leaves of autumn's trees would wither and fall if

one sharp winter's frost should pass over them. It is not so when a man, in the dire hour of his distress, casts himself upon God and believes He is able to succor and to help him. Then there is evidence of true reliance and real confidence in a real God, whom the mind's eye sees and rejoices in. It is this actuality, this making God real to the soul which makes our calling upon God in the day of trouble so acceptable to Him.

There is more here, however, than this first good thing. When a man calls upon God in the day of trouble it is because he seeks and in some measure enjoys *a spiritual communion with God*. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble." That call is heart language addressed to God. It is the soul really speaking to the great Father beyond all question. How easy it is to say a prayer without coming into any contact with God! Year after year the tongue repeats pious language, just as a barrel organ grinds out the old tunes, and there may be no more converse with the Lord than if the man had muttered to the ghosts of the slain. Many prayers might as well be said backwards as forwards, for there would be as much in them one way as the other. The abracadabra of the magician has quite as much virtue in it as any other set of mere words. The Lord's Prayer, if it is merely rehearsed as a form, may be a solemn mockery. But prayer in the day of trouble is honest speech with God, or at least a sincere desire in that direction. Many are the words which pass between the Lord and the afflicted saint. He cries, "Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me. Hide not Your face from me, for I am in trouble. Hear my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer!" With multiplied entreaties does the heart thus hold converse with the Lord and the Lord takes pleasure in it. He loves to have His people draw near to Him in spirit and in truth, and because calling upon Him in the day of trouble is an undoubted form of fellowship, therefore He regards it with pleasure.

Now, as I have already said, in the sacrifice of bullocks there was no communion with God in the case of a great many and in external devotion, whether it is performed in a cathedral or in a humble barn, there is frequently no coming near to God, but when we believingly call upon God in the day of trouble, then there is no mistake in the matter—we are holding converse with God, "The righteous cry and the Lord hears." Union with the unseen, spiritual Father is genuine indeed when it is carried on against wind and tide, under pressure of sorrow and weight of distress. The Lord give us to carry it on whatever may happen to us.

Yet is there more than this, for the soul not only comes into God's presence, but in calling upon God in the day of trouble it is *filled with a manifest hope in God.* It hopes in God for His goodness, for it is a belief in that goodness which is the reason why it feels able to pray at all. The soul hopes in His mercy, or it would dwell in silence and never lift up another cry to heaven. Amid a sense of deserved wrath, the heart has a trust in infinite grace and hence its call.

A soul calling upon God honors His condescension. The troubled one says within himself, "I am less than the least of all His mercies, yet He will regard me. When I consider the heavens, the work of His fingers, I wonder that He should visit man, but I believe that He will do so and that

He will condescend to look upon the contrite and humble and deliver them out of their distresses." There is a hope, then, in such a prayer which honors God's goodness and condescension and equally pays tribute to His faithfulness and His all-sufficiency. He has promised to help those that call upon Him, therefore do we call upon Him, and He has all power to keep His promise, therefore do we come to Him and spread our case before Him. Little as the act of calling upon God in the day of trouble seems to be, it puts crowns upon all the attributes of God in proportion to the spiritual knowledge of the suppliant. I venture to say that if the greatest king of Israel had presented before God, on some solemn day, ten thousand of the fattest of fed beasts and poured out rivers of oil, it might be highly possible that God would not be so well pleased with all that royal zeal as with the cry of a poor humble woman whose husband was dead and whose two sons were about to be taken for slaves, who had nothing in the house except a little oil and then in her extremity cried, "O God, the Father of the fatherless and the Judge of the widow, out of the depths deliver me." There may be more honoring of the Lord in a plowboy's tear than in a princely endowment. More homage to the Lord in the humble hope of a dying pauper than in the pealing anthems of the cathedral, or the great shout of our own mighty congregation. The publican's confession and his hope in the mercy of God had more worship in it than the blast of the silver trumpets and the ringing out of the golden harps, and the songs of the white-robed choristers who stood in the courts of the Lord's house and led the far-sounding hallelujahs of Israel.

This calling upon God in the day of trouble, again, pleases the Lord because it exhibits *a clinging affection to Him*. When an ungodly man professes religion, as such men often do, he is all very well with God as long as God pleases him. Sunshiny weather makes such a man bless the sun. If God smiles upon him, he says that God is good. Ay, but a true child of God loves a chastening God. He does not turn his back when the Lord seems angry with him, but then it is he falls prostrate in humble supplication and cries, "Show me wherefore You contend with me. I will not believe You to have any real spite against me. If You smite me, there must be some wise and good cause for it, therefore show me, I beseech You." It is very sweet, brethren, when God sends you a great deal of trouble, to love Him all the more for it. This is a sure way of proving that ours is not a hireling love, which abides while it gets its price and goes when wages fail. God forbid that we should have Balaam's love of reward and Judas's treacherous greed. A dog will follow a man as long as he throws him a bone, but that is a man's own dog which will follow him when he strikes him with the whip and will even fawn upon him when he speaks roughly to him. Such Christians ought we to be who will keep close to God when He is robed in thunder. It is ours to will that God shall do what He wills and ours to call upon Him in the day of trouble and not to call out against Him when times are hard. I would trust my God as unreservedly as Alexander trusted his friend, who was also his physician. The physician had mixed a medicine for Alexander, who was sick, and the potion stood by Alexander's bed for him to drink. Just before he was to drink, a

letter was delivered to him in which he was warned that his physician had been bribed to poison him and had mingled poison with the medicine. Alexander read the letter and summoned the physician into his presence, and when he came in, Alexander at once drank up the cup of medicine and then handed his friend the letter. What grand confidence was this! To risk his life upon his friend's fidelity! Such a man might well have friends. He would not let the accused know of the libel till he had proved beyond all disputes that he did not believe a word of it.

Is not our heavenly Father in Christ Jesus worthy of even a grander faith? Shall I ever mistrust Him? The devil tells me, my Lord, that this affliction which I am suffering will work me ill. I do not believe it. Not for a moment do I believe it and to prove that I have no suspicion, I accept it joyfully at Your hands. I joy and rejoice in it because You have ordained it and I call upon You to make it work to my lasting good. I will take bitter at Your hand as well as sweet and the gall shall be honey to me. If we act thus we shall be imitating the patience of Job. When his wife told him to curse God and die, what did he say? "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. What! Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?" It seems to me we cannot glorify God better than by thus calling upon Him in the day of trouble and thus showing that we do not believe ill of Him or suspect Him either of error or unkindness. We go further and are assured that infallible wisdom and infinite love are at the bottom of every trial which afflicts our spirit—thus we glorify the Lord.

There is in connection with this clinging affection a most *steadfast confidence*. They who call upon God in the day of trouble become quiet and unshaken and abide in full assurance as to the Lord on whom they rely. O troubled one, do not be agitated. Do not run away to others, but call upon God in calm faith. Do not sit down in silent despair and fretfulness, but call upon God. Do not be soured into a morose state of mind, nor go into the sulks, but call upon the Lord as one who cannot be driven to curse or to be in a passion, but gives himself to prayer. It is a blessed thing when we can say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" and can feel that whatever happens to us, we never will start aside from our firm conviction that the Lord is good and His mercy endures forever. It was a brave speech of Zwingli when, amid furious persecutions, he said, "Had I not perceived that the Lord was preserving the vessel, I should long ago have abandoned the helm. I behold Him through the tempest strengthening the cordage, adjusting the yards, spreading the sails, and commanding the very winds. Should I not, then, be a coward and unworthy the name of a man, were I to abandon my post? I commit myself wholly to His sovereign goodness. Let Him govern. Let Him hasten or delay. Let Him plunge us into the bottom of the abyss—we will fear nothing." That is the word which I admire, "Let Him plunge us into the bottom of the abyss—we will fear nothing." This is the bravery of a child who knows no dread because he is in his father's hand and his trust in his father cannot admit a fear. Calling upon God enables men to face trouble and play the man since they doubt not of a blessed outcome from all things, however contrary they may seem to be. Our business is

to be as confident in God at one time as at another since He is the same evermore and mere changes in circumstances are matters unworthy to be taken into the estimate. What are circumstances while Almighty God has the rule of them?

In summary, this it is which God accepts as honoring Him, that in the day of trouble we should take all our troubles to Him, pour out our hearts before Him, and then leave the whole case in His hands. The childlike uncovering of the heart to God alone is very precious to Him. There are times when it is wise to advise a troubled heart to be quiet before men—

"Bear and forbear and silent be,
Tell no man your misery."

But it is always wise to bare the bosom to the Lord's eye. Is the slander too vile to be communicated even to a single friend? Then follow the example of Hezekiah and spread Rabshakeh's letter before the Lord. Is the trial too severe, inasmuch as others are obliged to suffer with you and are therefore turned to speak bitterly against you? Then imitate David at Ziklag and encourage yourself in the Lord your God. Hide nothing. Reserve nothing. Tell it all and then trust about it all. When you have once put the burden before the Lord, leave it with Him. Do all that lies in you, that prudence can dictate or common sense suggest or industry effect—but still make the Lord your mainstay, your buckler, your shield, your fortress, and high tower. Say to yourself, "My soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." If you can do this, not once and again, but throughout your whole life, you will glorify the Lord greatly and in your holy confidence and childlike faith the Lord will take as much delight as in the golden harps which ring out His perfect praises before His eternal throne. If we could reproduce Job and Enoch in one person, the patient saint continually walking with God, we should indeed show forth the glory of our heavenly Father. And why not? Blessed Spirit of God, You can work us to this selfsame thing!

A critic may sneeringly say, "It is a very natural thing for a man to cry out to God in the day of trouble and certainly a selfish thing to run to the Lord because you need His help." "Besides," says another, "it must be a very distracted prayer that such a person offers and faith under troublous circumstances is a very elementary virtue." But my good sirs, hearken. Surely the Lord knows best what pleases Him and if He declares His delight in our calling upon Him in the day of trouble, why should we dispute Him? It is so, for He has said it. As for us who dare not raise such quibbles, let us not be moved by them, but continue to call upon Him in the day of trouble and we shall certainly glorify His name.

II. When we call upon God in the day of trouble IT BRINGS HONOR TO GOD THROUGH THE ANSWER which the prayer obtains. "I will deliver you." I ask you, troubled saints, to follow me while I repeat the text with variations, for that is about all I shall attempt. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble"—there is the prayer commanded. "I will deliver you"—there is the answer promised. In these words, we have *a practical answer*. It is not merely, "I will think about you, I will hear you, I will pro-

pose plans for you, and somewhat aid you in working them out," but, "I will deliver you. You shall have solid, substantial aid. Either I will keep you out of the trouble of which you are afraid—you shall be delivered by never having to endure it—the Egyptians that you see today you shall see no more forever. You dread the stone at the mouth of the sepulcher, but you shall find it rolled away. Or else, if you must come into the trouble, I will deliver you while you are in it. Like Noah, you shall be surrounded by the deluge, but the floods shall not overflow you. Like the three holy children, you shall be in the furnace, but the fire shall not burn you. You shall go through the trouble triumphantly, as Israel went through the Red Sea on foot. You shall have such sustaining grace that you shall glory in tribulation and rejoice in affliction. I will also bring you out of it altogether—for these things have an appointed end. Like Joseph, you shall come forth out of prison to sit upon the throne. Like David, you shall leave the caves and the rocks of the wild goats and I will set your feet in a large room. Like Daniel, you shall be taken from among lions and set among princes. The promise may be kept in several forms, but in one shape or another it must be carried out, for He who cannot lie has said, "I will deliver you." Dear friend, grip those words and never let them go. You troubled ones, the Lord says, "Call upon Me." Have you already been in much supplication? Now, then, take to yourselves what the Lord Himself gives you, "I will deliver you." Somehow or other a way of escape must be made, for God's Word never fails and He has said, "I will deliver you."

Notice, next, that it is *a positive answer*. It is not, "I may, perhaps, deliver you," but, "I will." It is not, "I will endeavor to do it," but, "I will deliver you." Did unbelief say, "But how?" Friend, leave the "how" with God. Ways and means are with Him. He says, "I will deliver you." To turn round and ask, "How?" is to forget that He is God all sufficient.—

"Remember that omnipotence
Has servants everywhere."

Unbelief is very ready with its questions and too often it inquires, "When?" Friend, leave the "when" with God. He does not tell us when, but the deliverance must come at the right time, because if He were not to deliver us till after we had perished, it would be no deliverance at all. If deliverance came too late, it would be a mere mockery. The promise comprehends within itself the implied condition that it shall be a timely deliverance, for otherwise how should the delivered one live to glorify the name of the Lord? Again I would say to you, dear friend, get a grip of this promise, "I will deliver you." Do not let my Master's promise be blown away like the withered leaves from the trees, but hold it fast as for life. Wave this before you and your foes will flee as from a two-edged sword. Quote the divine word, "I will deliver you," and legions of devils will flee before you. Remember how Paul put it, "Who delivered us from so great a death and does deliver: in whom we trust; that He will yet deliver us."

Notice next, that the promise *is personal*. "I will deliver you." It is not said, "My angels shall do it," but, "I will deliver *you*." The Lord God Himself undertakes to rescue His people. "I will be a wall of fire round about

them." "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

Then, too, it is personal to its object—it is the same man who calls upon God in trouble who shall be a partaker of the blessing. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver *you*." It is personal, personal *to you*. Therefore, dear friend, personally believe in this personal promise of your God.

Recollect, also, that it is permanent. You pleaded this promise, some of you, fifty years ago—it is as sure today as it was then. If you have a banknote and take it to the bank and get the cash, it is done with. But my Master's banknotes are self-renewing. You can plead His promise hundreds of times over, for His Word abides forever. It is fulfilled only to be fulfilled again. Like a springing well, which is always full and flowing, so my Lord's grace-words abide and continue in all their wealth of blessing. God's promise made two thousand years ago is as valid as if it had been uttered this morning and never yet expended upon a single soul. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you" is a word for this very hour. Where are you at this moment, you troubled, downcast one? You said just now, "I shall never be happy any more." Recall those words. Eat them with bitter herbs of repentance, "Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." You said, "That blow has crushed me. I could have borne anything else, but this trial I cannot bear." Tush! Do you know what you can bear? What said the apostle? "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." Only have faith in God and obey and believe the text, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you." Can you not take God at His Word? If you can, you shall find His promise true and God will be glorified in delivering you. What praise will come to His name if He lifts you up out of the low dungeon, if He snaps your fetters, if He tears away your entanglements, if He makes plain your intricate path, if He brings you through difficulties which now seem to be impossibilities and gives you to rejoice in Him through them all! Why, then, His name will be glorified far more than by the offering of ten thousand bullocks and rivers of oil.

III. Lastly, if you trust your God in your distress and are, therefore, delivered, THE LORD WILL BE GLORIFIED IN YOUR CONDUCT AFTERWARDS. When a man prays to God in the hour of trouble and gets deliverance, as he is sure to get it, then he honors his great Helper by admiring the way in which the promise has been kept and by *adoring and blessing the loving Lord for such a gracious interposition*. I know some of you have seen enough of the hand of the Lord in your own cases to make you wonder and admire forever and ever.

Next, you will honor Him by *the gratitude of your heart* in which the memory of His goodness will forever be recorded. This devout gratitude of yours will lead you in due season to bear *testimony to His faithfulness*. You will be indignant at unbelief and will war against it by personal witnessing. You will be very tender towards those who are now in trouble, as you once were, and you will long to tell them of the blessed rescue which God is prepared to perform for them as He did for you. Your mouth will

be open, your witness will be enlarged, you will speak as a man who has tasted and handled these things for himself. Others will be impressed as you tell the story of what the Lord has done for your soul. At the same time, you will *personally grow in faith* by the experience of your heavenly Father's love and power, and in days to come you will glorify Him by *increased patience and confidence*. You will say, "He has been with me in six troubles and He will be with me in the seventh. I have tried and proven my God and I dare not doubt Him." Your serenity of mind will be more deep and lasting and you will be able to defy the power of Satan to drive you out of your joy in God. I know also that you will try to *live more to His praise*. As you see Him bring you out of one difficulty and then another you will feel bound to His service by fresh bonds. You will become a more consecrated man than you ever have been. You will jealously protect your remaining days from being wasted by sloth or desecrated by sin. And let me tell you that even when you die and come up the banks of Jordan on the other side, you will long to glorify your God. When the angels meet you, I should not wonder but what one of the first things you will do will be to say, "Bright spirits, I long to tell you what the Lord has done for me." Even as you are going up towards the celestial gates, as Bunyan pictures, I should not wonder if you began to say to your guide, "Help me to sing. I cannot be silent. I feel I must—

"Sing with rapture and surprise
His loving-kindness in the skies."

Should the bright spirit remind you that you are climbing to the choirs where all the singers meet, you may answer, "Yes, but I am a special case. I came through such deep waters. I was greatly afflicted. If one in heaven can praise Him more than another, I am just that one." The angel will smile and say, "I have escorted many a score up to glory who said just the same." We each one owe most to God's grace and hope to praise Him best. Some of you may think that you are love's deepest debtors, but I know better. I am not going to quarrel with you, but I know one who is so undeserving and yet receives such mercy that he claims to take the lowest place and most humbly to reverence boundless grace. Yes, I myself, less than the least of all saints, claim to have received most at His hands. I would fain love Him most, for towards me He has shown the utmost love in treating me as He has done. Am I not saying for myself that which you each would say for yourself? I know it is so and hence it is that God is glorified by the reverence and love of those whom He delivers in answer to prayer.

I want you to notice with care the persons mentioned in the first clause of the text. You do not see yourself—you only hear of yourself. It is "Call upon Me." God is there. There is no direct mention of you—you are hidden. You are such a poor, broken, dispirited creature that all you can do is to utter a cry and lie in the dust. There stands the mighty God and you call upon Him.

Now, look at the next clause, "*I* will deliver *you*." Here are two persons. The Lord stands first, the Ever Glorious and Blessed "I," and far down there are you. "I will deliver you," poor, humble, but grateful "you." Thus we see the Lord unites with His poor servant and the link is deliverance.

When you come to the third clause, do you see where you are? You are placed first, for the Lord now calls you into action, "*You* shall glorify Me." What a wonderful thing it is! For God to put glory upon us is easy enough, but for us to put glory upon Him, this is a miracle of condescension on the part of our God. "You shall glorify Me."

"But," says one in this place, "I love the Lord, but I cannot glorify Him. I wish I could preach, I wish I could write sweet hymns, I wish I had a clear voice with which to sing out the Redeemer's praises, but I have no gifts or talents and therefore I shall never be able to glorify Him." Listen. You will be cast into trouble one of these days and when you are in trouble you will find out how to glorify Him. Your extremity will be your opportunity. Like a lamp which shines not by day, you will blaze up in the dark. When the day of trouble is come you will cry, "Lord, I could not do anything for You, but You can do everything for me. I am nothing, but Lord, in my nothingness, I, poor I, do trust You and fling myself upon You." Then you shall find that you have glorified Him by your faith. I think you might almost be content to have the trouble, might you not? It seems as if you could not glorify Him anyhow else and to glorify Him is the main object of your existence. Some Christians would scarcely have brought any glory to God if they had not been led by paths of sorrow and made to wade through seas of grief. God gets very little glory out of many professors and He would have still less if they had been allowed to rust their souls away in comfort. The brightest of the saints owe much of their clearness to the fire and the file. It is by the sharp needle of sorrow that we are embroidered with the praises of the Lord. We must be tried that the Lord may be glorified. We cannot call upon Him in the day of trouble if we have no such day and He cannot deliver us if we have no trouble to be delivered from and we cannot glorify Him if we are not made to see the danger and the need in which He displays His love.

I leave the blessed subject of the text with you, as a souvenir, till we meet again. The Lord be with you till the day breaks and the shadows flee away. Pray, also, that He may abide with me and with all my brethren in the ministry, and may we all in yonder world of rest glorify Him who will then have delivered us completely from all evil, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

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CHOICE COMFORT FOR A YOUNG BELIEVER
NO. 1506

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

"The Lord will perfect that which concerns me: Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever: forsake not the works of Your own hands." Psalm 138:8.

CONTINUALLY I am clearing the ground and laying the foundation of eternal salvation in the grace of God which was manifested in Christ Jesus when He came into the world to save sinners. This I did this morning and the Lord has set His seal thereon right speedily, which is to me a sure proof that the frequent preaching of the foundation truths is according to the mind of God. That necessary work cannot be done too often, for men need to hear the true gospel as often as they hear the striking of the hour and even then they forget it. Yet do not all forget. There are a few, like those who were saved with Noah, who seek the ark of salvation and live. To those who have newly come to put their trust in Jesus I wish to speak this evening and I do so with much delight, for as the sight of the new-born babe makes glad the mother, so does the news of a new-born soul fill me with exceeding joy. Good tidings have come to my ears. We do not often sow and reap quite so quickly as I have done on this occasion, for since this morning's service I have hopeful evidence that God has blessed the Word to many souls and my beloved fellow helpers, who watch around this congregation like scouts around an army, report that the slain of the Lord have been many.

Now, between half-past twelve o'clock this morning and this time in the evening such souls have gone a day's journey towards heaven and already they have begun, I dare say, to question themselves and possibly to be exercised with some few fears. Thus early they may have met with lions in the way or have found worse than real lions in their own fears. They have only lately known the Lord, but already they are growing anxious and looking into the future with a somewhat troubled gaze. Therefore, come we forth lovingly as a shepherd hastens to cherish the new-born lambs. We come to the little ones with words of good cheer, for they need them and we have special orders from our Master to see that they are tenderly comforted. We trust to also speak to those who have known the Lord for many years some words of help with regard to matters which may now be causing them alarm. The consolations of the Lord are very reviving and in number they abound, therefore let small and great partake of them. "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God."

When a man becomes a Christian and the grace of God commences its work in his soul, he learns to be serious and thoughtful. That is one of the first noticeable changes in him. He renounces his former careless-

ness and indifference and becomes a sober, considerate man in whose mind there is a deep concern as to his own character in the sight of God. He is concerned about the temptations he meets with in his walk among the sons of men lest these temptations should be too much for him and he should be betrayed into sin. He longs to lead a holy life. In fact, holiness is his great concern. He prays that he may leave such a life behind him for others to remember as shall be worth their following as an example. He asks himself, "Will the hope I have just obtained really endure to the last days of my life? Will it sustain me amidst the pangs and weaknesses of death? Is it truly such that when I go before the burning throne of God Himself I need not tremble?" Such matters were sport to him once—they are serious questions now. He has thrown down the cap and bells of the jester and taken up the staff of a pilgrim and the sword of a warrior, confessing in an unmistakable manner that "life is real, life is earnest." He is a man of *concern* now, concerned about his soul's affairs, his sins, his life, his death, his eternal salvation. A solemn air is about him—he hears the wheels of eternity sounding in his ears, he girds his loins for his lifework, and he puts away childish things.

This is well, but as every state has its dangers, so the peril of religious *concern* is despondency. Thoughtfulness soon degenerates into distrust and holy anxiety easily rusts into unbelief. The more a man looks within him, the less he can trust himself, and the more a man looks around him, the more he feels that he is in danger and so he is apt very early in his Christian course to be downcast and much afraid and to say within himself, "I shall surely one day fall by the hands of the enemy. My confidence will prove to be a delusion and my conversion a fiction." He is fearful as to the result of future temptations, like a fresh recruit in the battle who feels certain that every boom of the cannon proclaims his death. Now I want, if God will help me, to meet such fears tonight. May the divine Spirit enable us now to have a strong and mighty faith in God, not only with regard to past transgression, which is clean gone through the atoning blood, but with regard to all the difficulties and dangers of the present and future, and may we drink into the spirit of the text which is now before us, "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me: Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever: forsake not the works of Your own hands."

Here first we see that *God fills us with assurance,* "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me." Secondly, *He gives us rest in His mercy,* "Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever." And thirdly, *He puts prayer into our hearts and supplies us with a plea,* "Forsake not the works of Your own hands." May God, the Holy Spirit, most graciously help us in this meditation.

I. At the beginning of our text, to meet our fears about the future, THE LORD FILLS US WITH ASSURANCE. "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me." You see the assurance is, first, that *God is really at work on our behalf*. Get a grip of this, you troubled one, and by a personal faith say, "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me." You have come to Jesus and trusted your soul in His hands—we take it for granted that you have done so—then it is certain that the Lord has brought you to

this state of mind, for never did a man in this world simply come and trust in Christ unless the Spirit of God had led him to it. What says the Savior? "No man comes unto Me except the Father which has sent Me draw him." You would never have come to a simple reliance upon the mediatorial work and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus if there had not been a work of grace in your soul. Every effect has a cause and all spiritual faith is created in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Since, then, the Lord has begun to save you, your confidence with regard to the future must be that He who began this good work will continue to operate in your soul. If the work of God upon your heart were discontinued, your life, your hope, your faith, your love would be discontinued, too, for you only live because the Holy Spirit lives and works in you. The same power which first made the world and built yonder arch of azure must sustain it still or the world would feel its final crash and the blue dome would utterly dissolve. Continued outgoings of power from the Creator are essential to the continued existence of creation. There is neither power, nor life, nor being apart from God. This is true in the kingdom of grace as much as in that of nature—we are gracious because God gives us grace and we keep His ways because the Lord keeps us by His power unto salvation. The new life within us has been created by the Lord and by Him it must be sustained. Let no one of my hearers forget this. You are to put your reliance upon the working of the eternal power and Godhead within your soul, for there is the fountain of grace and thence the streams must flow. Now mind you, if you base your reliance upon your own perseverance, your own prayerfulness, your own spirituality, your own strength of resolution, or your own settledness of purpose, you will learn that "Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm." For of all the men in the world who are unfit to be trusted, the most unfit one is yourself. It were almost better to trust your fellow man than to trust in yourself. "Trust in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

I think you will see that the first clause of the text means just this, "*The Lord* will perfect that which concerns me," not, "I will perfect it myself," but, "The Lord will do it." There is a consciousness that God is at work and the full assurance that *He will still be at work* in order to complete that which He has commenced. Have you obtained a religion which is not the work of God? Then I would exhort you to get rid of it. If your religion shines and glitters and seems to you to be inexpressibly lovely, yet if it has budded out of your own nature or is the result of your own free will and is not traceable to the operation of divine grace, and to divine grace alone, do as the man did with the bad banknote, throw it down on the highway or into a ditch and run away from it. Let no one know that the homemade counterfeit belongs to you. For it is worthless now and it will prove deceptive at the last. But and if the religion you have received is the work of God, then be certain that He who began the work will perfect it. Be well assured that He who works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure will always find a pleasure in thus working and will never forsake the work of His own hands.

The psalmist, however, did not merely believe that God was at work and would be at work, but he affirms that He will complete the work. "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me." Has He begun it? Then, my soul, rest sure of this, that He will finish it. Have you ever seen an unfinished work of God? If you had been present on the second or the third day of the week of creation you might have seen a work unfinished. Before the morning stars sang together over a perfect creation, many things were made, but the complete chain of being was not as yet visible. But did the Almighty pause in the middle of the week and leave His design unfinished? How would the record of creation run? That God had made the light but had not made the sun? That He had made the waters, but had not divided them from the land or said to the sea, "Hitherto shall you go, but no farther"? No, the first day of creation was a guarantee of the five which followed it and of the grand rest-day which crowned the week. You might have been certain from that very first day when He said, "Let there be light," that He meant to make eyes to see the light. And when there were living creatures for each domain of nature, beasts of the field, fowl of the air, and fish of the sea, you might be morally certain that He meant to crown the kingdom of nature by bringing forth into it a being to whom He should say, "I have made you to have dominion over the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea and whatsoever passes through the paths of the sea." God's beginnings ensure His endings. He makes no mistake in the plan and feels no weariness in the execution and hence when He puts forth His hand He never draws it back till His work is done. It is always so. Devils of hell and men under their influence no doubt think to stop the path of God in divine providence, but He who can lift the telescope of prophecy and can see the end of the present age, may also hear the ultimate millennial song of, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigns" going up from every hill and dale of this emancipated earth. No machinations of hell or craft of the prince of darkness can ever prevent the Lord from bringing about the consummation of His promise for which His church is daily praying.

Here then, youthful believer, is your confidence—you have begun to be a Christian. God's grace has just changed your heart. You are anxiously asking, "How shall I persevere to the end? How shall I arrive at perfection?" You shall be kept and perfected by the Lord in whom you trust. The same power which commenced a good work in you can complete it and will. Do you doubt it? Think of what is done at the beginning of spiritual life and let this confirm you as to its end. The Holy Spirit raises men from the dead—can He not keep them alive after He has made them alive? He brings His people out of Egypt in the day that they believe—do you think that He who brings them out cannot preserve them in the wilderness till He lands them in Canaan? He has already given us Christ to be the bread of heaven, will He not furnish us with that bread till we shall enter into the purchased possession? Let us rest in confidence. Our Alpha will be our Omega and He will secure every letter which lies between, for it is not His way to lay a foundation without building thereon even to the top stone.

Now, I want you to have this blessed confidence that God is at work and will finish what He has begun and I would have you carry this confidence into everything. You may take it into providence—the Lord will perfect that which concerns you there. Dear friend, you have a plan on hand. You say, "I wish I could be sure that I shall carry it through. Can you tell me?" No, I cannot. I can tell you this, however, that if it really ought to be your purpose, if it is God's plan for you for life, you will carry it through. I have known men, actuated by their own folly, obstinately choose a pursuit for which they were not fit, and in such cases one of the best things that the Lord can do for them is to make them suffer shipwreck and lose their all. It would have been a bad case for our friend Jonah if he had really gone down to Tarshish, for I do not know what he would have done there—he could not have turned sailor, for no crew would have endured so sour a comrade. It was a great mercy for him when he was thrown into the sea and was forced to travel towards Nineveh in the fish's belly. And so sometimes we enter upon a giant scheme of our own inventing, but it is not the Lord's scheme and so it comes to nothing. Like Jehosaphat, we make ships of Tarshish go to Ophir for gold, but they go not, for they are broken at Ezion-gaber as Jehoshaphat's navy was and we complain, perhaps, but it is better to submit, for it comes forth from the Lord of hosts who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. He often perfects that which truly concerns us by taking us away from that which never ought to concern us. It may be, dear hearer, that the Lord is dealing thus with you. You have been setting up in business in the direction of your own choice and not of His, so He ends that matter by a heavy loss and you may be very thankful that He does so. But that course of life which you have submitted to His wisdom, which you have taken up in obedience to the plain indications of His providence, which you follow out with integrity, walking before the Lord with all singleness of purpose and committing your way unto Him—that course of life, I say, shall have His blessing and none shall be able to put you on one side. He will perfect, in your case, that which concerns you. The Lord told David that he should be a king. It did not look very likely when he was a lowly shepherd, but since such was the purpose of the Eternal, there was no keeping the son of Jesse off the throne. He is called to court and there Saul's javelin almost makes an end of him. He goes to battle and takes a giant's head and that brings the king's envy upon him. He is hunted like a partridge on the mountains by those who thirsted for his life, *but he must be king*—no Saul or Deog could hinder the divine decree—David must be king. Though he will not lift a hand to smite Saul, yet must his persecutor vacate the royal seat for him. Judah shall acknowledge him, but half a crown shall not be enough, speedily shall Israel submit to him. The Lord must perfect that which concerns him and make him king over the whole nation and establish the throne to his seed after him. Now, my brother, if the Lord has called you to the work of the ministry, the devil cannot shut the mouth that God opens. If He has called you to any post of honor or difficulty in His church or for His cause, you will arrive at it and your hands shall be sufficient for you.

Whatever may stand in the way, the Lord will carry you through and perfect that which concerns you. Rest you sure of that. "If I thought so," says one, "I should be much more quiet than I am." Think so, my brother, and be quiet. "Oh, but I should feel more confidence." Have confidence, brother. Perhaps that very confidence will be the means to the end and help you to succeed. "Such assurance would make me more patient and I should not put out my hand so hastily if I knew that what I am hoping for would come in due time." Do not put out your hand hastily, brother. Keep back just as David did when there was Saul lying before him sound asleep and his spear was ready for fatal use. Then his friend said to him, "Let me smite him but this once." It could have been done in an instant and the crown would have been gained by a single stroke. But David did not take the business into his own hands—he would leave matters with God.

Though a sin may seem to be the straight line which leads to an end, yet be sure of this, that it is always the longest way. The nearest way to be a gainer forever is to be a loser for the present for conscience sake, while the road to failure and to shame is found in the tempting path of hastening to be rich. Be sure that it is no business of yours to perfect that which concerns you in providence. God has promised to do it and only presumption will dare to interfere. "Stand still and see the salvation of God" is often the wisest policy as well as the truest heroism. Take care that you put not forth an unbelieving hand to snatch the unripe fruit from the tree. Wait, and in patience possess your soul.

But this, dear friends, is more especially true in the work of grace in the heart. In that case the Lord will perfect that which concerns you. You have only a little faith. It looks like a spark and scarcely can be called a flame, but it will increase until it burns aloft like a beacon fire. The Lord will give you an Abrahamic faith if you will wait upon Him for it and exercise what faith you already possess. Trust Him, trust Him with your faith. Trust Him with your trust. You have a little love and you sigh to be altogether taken up with affection for your Lord—such affection shall be worked in you before long—even that "perfect love, which casts out fear." Trust God with your love and the God of love will reveal Himself in you till your whole soul is saturated with gratitude. You have some little of the likeness of Christ already. Walk before the Lord in all confidence and He will sketch the image of Christ upon your character to perfection and you shall become so manifestly Christly that men shall know you to be Christ's disciple by your very speech. You are a long way from being perfect yet, you say. Ah, but you shall be perfect—the Lord will perfect that which concerns you. Will you know yourself, brother, when you are made perfect? I do not expect to see you coming up these aisles when you have reached that point, for another and better assembly will claim you and gain you. If at some future period of your sojourn here I should hear you say, "I am perfect," I shall know better at once, for you will prove your pride by your silly bragging. Yet you will one day be completely holy and spotlessly pure. You and I and all those who trust in Christ shall be perfect—every sin cast out, every virtue brought to harmonious complete-

ness. We shall be holy as our Father in heaven. "Oh," says one, "that is the best news I ever heard. Shall I be perfect?" Yes, as surely as you are in the perfect Christ so surely shall you be perfect with Him. We shall be holy, unblameable, and unreprovable in His sight in the day of His appearing. Even while we are here, we are struggling after perfectness—this is the goal to which we run—this is the target at which we aim. That we may perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord and be sanctified spirit, soul, and body is the high ambition of our lives. Let us never despair of it, for there stands the promise, "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me."

Now, if this is true in providence and true of the work of grace in us, it is also true of the work of grace all around us. How often do I go before the Lord with the weight of this church and all its institutions upon me and I cry from my heart, "What will come of them all?" Then it is my confidence and delight that the Lord will perfect that which concerns me. Hitherto He has helped me in a marvelous manner and why should I fancy that He will forsake me, seeing that with all my heart I desire to honor Him? Only have trust in God, you who live for the glory of Christ and as your day your strength shall be. You shall go forth conquering and to conquer if your sword is drawn alone in Christ's quarrel. If your charge is but a few children in the Sunday school, or if it is the raising of a cause for Christ in a hamlet or a village, only give your whole soul to it and rest in God and you shall find Him perfecting that which concerns you. Why, we have not half the confidence in God about our religious efforts that we ought to have. We go to work with a faint heart and tremblingly hope that perhaps we shall succeed. Look how amazed we are when we find a soul converted here and there, and what a noise we make over a solitary convert, like a hen that has laid a single egg and must tell all the world about it. If we had more confidence in God, we should expect converts by the hundreds and we should have them. We should go to work with the great weapon of the gospel which God has put into our hands and with the power which God has promised, we would see the kingdom given unto Messiah and the pleasure of the Lord would prosper in His hands. May we have faith enough to be certain that our unchanging God will perfect that which concerns us. So I leave that first part, trusting that our hearts may be filled with quiet assurance by the Holy Spirit.

II. And now, secondly and very briefly, THE LORD GIVES US REST IN HIS MERCY, for what says the text, "Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever." See, my brethren, how this works in us rest from fear? "Alas!" sighs one troubled heart, "I fear I shall fall into many sins between here and heaven." Well may you have that dread, my brother. But you may readily overcome the fear by singing in your heart, "Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever." The blood of atonement will never fail and therefore mercy will always endure. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."—

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

Your sins between here and heaven shall be forgiven you, so let the dread of condemnation be banished.

Then comes up another fear—"But I do not see how I am to be perfected. My nature is so vile. I find such resistance to the divine operations. The flesh struggles against the Spirit and I cannot get my rebellious flesh to be subject to the law of God." The answer to this distressing lament is the same as in the former case, "His mercy endures forever." He will bear with you and forbear beyond all bounds. None but a God could have patience with you, but the Lord is God and not man. Some of God's children are the most crooked people that ever were in this world and it must be sovereignty which chose them, for they are by no means naturally desirable or attractive. It was hard work even for a Moses to have patience with them of old. Though he was the meekest of men, yet his anger waxed hot against them and he said, "Hear now, you rebels," but their God had no such angry word for them, He was still patient and bore with them for forty years. Brother, sister, He will have patience with you because His mercy endures forever. He has been teaching you faith, but how slowly you have learned! There is a man who has been learning faith these five-and-twenty years and he is an unbeliever still at times. Doubts frequently mar the face of his assurance, but the Lord still bears with his unbelief and goes on to teach him little by little, line upon line, precept upon precept. There is one here who has been taught love. Ay, for the past forty years that brother has been learning love to the Lord and love to the brethren, spelling out the lessons of love letter by letter. He is in the infant class even now, but the Lord is having a deal of patience with him and He will yet make him tender, considerate, and affectionate. Let us hope it will be soon, for his own sake, and still more for the sake of his brethren to whom he acts so roughly. Many of God's people are very slow learners—they have been at school these twenty years and cannot yet read their own titles to eternal mansions, though penned in capitals by their Redeemer's own hand. As for myself, I am more brutish than any man and other teachers would long ago have lost patience with me, but "the Lord will perfect that which concerns me, for His mercy endures forever."

Between now and heaven, dear brethren, some of you will perhaps have to pass through a great deal of affliction and some of us who are called daily to see others suffer feel much tenderness towards those who are the children of affliction and therefore we speak with great sympathy when we say, "Do not shudder with regard to those pains and tremors which may come over your poor trembling frame, for His mercy endures forever. He will make your bed in your sickness and underneath you shall be the everlasting arms."

Between here and heaven perhaps you will experience a great many needs. It may be you have been afraid of poverty. You have not a very large sum of money in the bank and you have not a very large sum in your pocket either, and sometimes you are out of work and you hardly know what you shall eat or what you shall drink—be this your comfort—"His mercy endures forever." "Having food and raiment let us be content,

for He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you." All the streams may dry, but the brook Cherith will flow on and even if that chosen rivulet should fail, behold God has a widow woman at Zarephath who will feed you. Though she has nothing herself but a handful of meal and a little oil in the cruse, yet you shall both live upon it till the famine is over. The heir of heaven shall not lack for the bread of earth while God lives, for it is written, "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shall you dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed." "He gives food unto all flesh, for His mercy endures forever." "Your bread shall be given you."

At last, unless the Lord should suddenly appear, there will come the hour of death which by many is exceedingly dreaded. You will gather up your feet in the bed and bid adieu to all temporal things and then the enduring mercy of God shall be your abounding consolation. A large part of our fears about death are idle. One man of God always feared death, but he might have spared himself his wretchedness, for he fell asleep one night in apparently excellent health and died in his sleep. He never could have known anything about dying, for on his face were no tokens of pain or struggle, nor was there any reason to believe that he ever awoke till he lifted up his eyes amid the cherubim. Beloved, if we die awake and even if we die in pain, we shall yet hope to die triumphantly. If we do not die shouting victory, we hope that we shall peacefully fall asleep—the Lord Himself kissing away our soul into the eternity of joy, "for His mercy endures forever." "He will perfect that which concerns me."

Now, I want you young friends, especially who are just beginning life, each one to feel, "Now, I am going to put myself and all my temporal circumstances, all my fears, all my engagements, my living, my dying, everything into the hand of God and there I am going to leave it. I will trust Him with my all. In the beginning I will trust Him and I will do so even to the end and go my way with this calm confidence, 'He will perfect that which concerns me, for His mercy endures forever.'" I remember hearing one of our evangelists once say that some Christian people, when they first profess to be Christians, are like a man who is going a long distance by rail, but only takes a ticket for a short distance and then he has to get out and make a rush for new tickets as he goes along. "Now," said he, "there are other believers who know better and take a ticket all the way through at the first, which is by far the wiser way." Some trust the Lord to keep them for a quarter of a year and others for a month, but when I believed in Christ Jesus, I thank His name, I trusted Him to save me to the end. I sought for and obtained a finished salvation, which is my joy and hope at this moment. I took a ticket all the way through and I have not had to get a fresh ticket yet. I have sometimes thought I should, but when I have run to the office, they have handed me back my old ticket, the one I lost, the same one as before, and I knew it to be the same, for it bore this stamp upon it, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." The believer is saved at first by believing and he shall be so to the last. Do not trust a rickety salvation which may break down with you—a temporary, trumpery salvation which may only last you for a time and then fail—to embrace with all your heart that divine promise, "I will never

leave you nor forsake you." Cry out after the living water which shall be in you as a well of water springing up unto everlasting life and suck the marrow out of this text, "He that believes in Me has"—has then and there, down on the nail—"has"—now, today, "has everlasting life"—not life for a time, but life everlasting as surely as he believes in Christ.

III. This brings me to conclude with the third clause of our text which is a prayer. The Lord, having given His people grace to rest in His mercy, He PUTS IT INTO THEIR HEARTS TO PRAY AND SUPPLIES THEM WITH A PLEA, "Forsake not the works of Your own hands."

To my mind, it is a very touching prayer. "Lord, You have begun the work upon me, go on to finish it, for if You do not, it will never be finished. If You leave it, it is left undone and I am undone indeed. But do not forsake the work of Your own hands." It is such a prayer as the clay might put up when it is revolving on the potter's wheel. The potter is using his best skill and producing an article of great beauty, bringing out its shape and form as it spins round before him. Already you can see something of what it will be—the design does not yet perfectly appear, but you can guess it. But suppose the potter were to stop the wheel, take up the clay and fling it back again into the lump, that vessel would never be finished, for it cannot finish itself. It has no power to shape itself in any degree and so if it were rational clay and could speak, it would say, "Forsake not the work of your own hands. Persevere in what you have begun." This is a prayer which you and I may well bring before God, whose workmanship we are. "O God, if I have only a little faith, yet You gave it to me. Oh, give me more. If You have given me only a desire after You, yet that desire is a divine creation. Have respect unto it, I pray You, and fulfill it." This is a powerful argument with our gracious God, for, brethren, He does not give you a little grace to tantalize you. Now He has given you a hunger and thirst after Him, suppose He does not satisfy you? That hunger and that thirst will be cruel gifts. He has taken away from you the power to be happy in the world, has He not? Well, if He does not intend to give you His own divine happiness, why has He made you weary of the world and the pleasures of sin? A dog likes bones and I am sure I would not teach him to leave his bones or turn him into a man if afterwards I had to say, "Now you have become a man, there is nothing for you. If you want a meal you must try the bones again." No, no. He who makes us hate the world means to give us something better. He who makes us loathe sin means to cleanse us from it. He who begins to build in our souls is not a foolish builder of whom it shall be said, "This man began to build, but was not able to finish." Do you think, brother, that the Lord has found out something in you which is so bad that it baffles Him and compels Him to give up His work? If it were so, why did He ever begin it? He knew what would be in you. The prescient eye of God foresaw every sin and every tendency to sin in the heart of every man that lives and so when He began His work He knew all that it would require to perfect it. He has not gone forth to fight the devil in you to discover that He is not strong enough to meet him. Oh, no, He knows the force of your evil nature, the force of your hasty temper, the force of that obstinate

self-love, the force of that imperious pride, the force of that dogged will—He knows all this, nor can anything take Him by surprise and therefore since He has begun to save you, rest assured that He will accomplish His design. His hand is not shortened, nor His heart dismayed. You may cry to Him out of the utmost depths and be quite assured that He can and will even there carry on His purposes of love, for He will not forsake the work of His own hands.

Go to Him, then, in prayer. Plead with Him mightily. Prayer is the channel appointed to convey to you the blessing. Open the valves and let the stream flow into your heart. Whenever you feel as if you must be broken in pieces like a poor earthen pot, then cry to Him, "Lord, forsake not the work of Your own hands. Oh, do not leave me, for I bear the print of Your hand. Be patient with this ill-worked clay and work upon me till You shall have made me a vessel unto honor fit for Your own special use."

In summary, the closing word is just this. I have often preached to you salvation to sinners, as sinners, just as you are and I have bid you, in my Master's name, come and receive that free mercy which He presents to the guilty, even to the guiltiest of all, when they will but take it and trust in His dear name. Now, I supplement that by advising you to carry the rule of faith into every part of your life. Trust the Lord Jesus for everything. Do not come tonight to trust in Christ half way, but for all things commit yourself into His eternal keeping, for He is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before His presence with exceeding great joy. If you believers have been trusting the divine Lord to keep you if you keeping yourselves, get beyond that and trust in Him to keep you that you may keep yourselves. If you have said, "I believe that He will be faithful to me if I am faithful to Him," go much farther, for it will never do to stop there. Trust in Him to make you faithful to Him. Do not suffer the pivot to rest in you—put the whole stress and burden upon the Lord Jesus. If you retain any, "if," or "but," about your eternal salvation, it will be a thorn in your pillow and a serpent at your heel. If you are the cornerstone and mainstay of your own salvation, you are a lost man. You must hang upon the sure nail, Christ Jesus, all the burden and all the glory of His Father's house. As for depending on your own watchfulness or constancy or anything else of your own, I want you to get right away from it and now, once for all, by an act which you shall rejoice in as long as you live, commit your whole future—time and eternity—into the pierced hand of Him who says that He gives to His sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand. In this one thing I would have you be as I am, for I have no shade of hope apart from the Lord Jesus, either as to my pardon or my perseverance, my new birth or my ultimate perfection. I need to know what is to become of me in death and what is to become of me when I live again in eternity, and if I could not have a far-reaching faith which flung itself across the awful gulf that separates this world from the next, my religion would yield me but small comfort.

But now tonight—and may everybody here be enabled to do so—I do put my whole self, my soul, my body, my engagements, my prospective sufferings, my future troubles, my labors—everything which has to do with me or about me into those same hand which bought me when they was nailed to the tree. He shall keep me or I shall never be kept. Once for all I make a deposit of my eternal interests and leave them with Him whose honor it is to keep safely that which is committed to Him. He is able to preserve me and I have done with it. I hand over my all to Him. Come, my brethren, do the same and when you have done so be of good cheer. A man takes his money into his bank and leaves it. He does not go back in a quarter of an hour and say, "Mr. Cashier, have you my money safely?" "Yes, sir." "Well I want to see it." They would not want such a man to deal with their bank long, for he has no confidence and will be more trouble than profit. Put in your all with Jesus and leave it there. Make a permanent investment. Draw the interest of it and spend it in present enjoyment, but leave your all as a permanent investment and sing with me—

"I know that safe with Him remains,
Protected by His power,
What I've committed to His hands
Till the decisive hour.
Then will He own my worthless name
Before His Father's face,
And in the New Jerusalem
Appoint my soul a place."

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"I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."
1 Corinthians 9:22.

IT is a grand thing to see a man thoroughly possessed with one master passion. Such a man is sure to be strong and if the master principle is excellent, he is sure to be excellent, too. The man of one object is a man indeed. Lives with many aims are like water trickling through innumerable streams, none of which is wide enough or deep enough to float the merest cockleshell of a boat. But a life with one object is like a mighty river flowing between its banks, bearing to the ocean a multitude of ships and spreading fertility on either side. Give me a man not only with a great object in his soul, but thoroughly possessed by it, his powers all concentrated, and he on fire with vehement zeal for his supreme object, and you have put before me one of the greatest sources of power which the world can produce. Give me a man engrossed with holy love as to his heart and filled with some masterly celestial thought as to his brain and such a man will be known wherever his lot may be cast and I will venture to prophesy that his name will be remembered long after the place of his sepulcher shall be forgotten.

Such a man was Paul. I am not about to set him upon a pedestal, that you may look at him and wonder, much less that you may kneel down and worship him as a saint. I mention Paul because what he was we ought every one of us to be, and though we cannot share in his office, not being apostles, though we cannot share in his talents or in his inspiration, yet we ought to be possessed by the same spirit which actuated him and let me also add, we ought to be possessed by it in the same degree. Do you object to that? I ask you what was there in Paul, by the grace of God, which may not be in you and what had Jesus done for Paul more than for you? He was divinely changed and so have you been if you have passed from darkness into marvelous light. He had much forgiven and so have you also been freely pardoned. He was redeemed by the blood of the Son of God and so have you been—at least you profess to have been. He was filled with the Spirit of God and so are you if you are truly such as your Christian profession makes you out to be. Owing, then, your salvation to Christ, being debtors to the precious blood of Jesus, and being quickened by the Holy Spirit, I ask you why there should not be the same fruit from the same sowing? Why not the same effect from the same cause? Do not tell me that the apostle was an exception and cannot be set up as a rule or model for common folk, for I shall have to tell you that we must be such as Paul was if we hope to be where Paul is. Paul did not think that he had attained, neither was already perfect. Shall we think

him to be so? So think him to be so as to regard him to be matchless and so be content to fall short of what he was? Nay, verily, but let it be our incessant prayer, as believers in Christ, that we may be followers of him so far as he followed Christ, and wherein he failed to set his feet in his Lord's footprints, may we even outstrip him and be more zealous, more devoted to Christ than even the apostle of the Gentiles. O that the Holy Spirit would bring us to be like our Lord Jesus Himself.

At this time, I shall have to speak to you upon *Paul's great object* in life. He tells us it was to "save some." We will then look into Paul's heart and show you a few of *the great reasons which made him think it so important that at least some should be saved.* Then, thirdly, we will indicate *certain of the means which the apostle used to that end,* and all with this view that you, my dear hearers, may seek to "save some," that you may seek this because of potent reasons which you cannot withstand, and that you may seek it with wise methods such as shall in the end succeed.

I. First, then, brethren, WHAT WAS PAUL'S GREAT OBJECT IN HIS DAILY LIFE AND MINISTRY? He says it was to save some. There are ministers of Christ present at this hour, together with City Missionaries, Bible-women, Sunday school teachers, and other workers in my Master's vineyard, and I make bold to inquire of each one of them—is this your object in all your Christian service? Do you above all things aim at saving souls? I am afraid that some have forgotten this grand object, but dear friends, anything short of this is unworthy to be the great end of a Christian's life. I fear there are some who preach with the view of *amusing* men and as long as people can be gathered in crowds and their ears can be tickled and they can retire pleased with what they have heard, the orator is content and folds his hands and goes back self-satisfied. But Paul did not lay himself out to please the public and collect the crowd. If he did not save them, he felt that it was of no use to interest them. Unless the truth had pierced their hearts, affected their lives, and made new men of them, Paul would have gone home crying, "Who has believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

It seems to be the opinion of a large party in the present day that the object of Christian effort should be to *educate* men. I grant you that education is in itself an exceedingly valuable thing, so valuable that I am sure the whole Christian church rejoices greatly that at last we have a national system of education which only needs to be carefully carried out and every child in this land will have the keys of knowledge in his hand. Whatever price others may set upon ignorance, we are promoters of knowledge, and the more it can be spread, the better shall we be pleased. But if the church of God thinks that it is sent into the world merely to train the mental faculties, it has made a very serious mistake, for the object of Christianity is not to educate men for their secular callings, or even to train them in the politer arts or the more elegant professions, or to enable them to enjoy the beauties of nature or the charms of poetry. Jesus Christ came not into the world for any of these things, but He came to seek and to save that which was lost, and on the same errand

has He sent His church and she is a traitor to the Master who sent her if she is beguiled by the beauties of taste and art to forget that to preach Christ and Him crucified is the only object for which she exists among the sons of men. The business of the church is salvation. The minister is to use all means to save some. He is no minister of Christ if this is not the one desire of his heart. Missionaries sink far below their level when they are content to civilize—their first object is to save. The same is true of the Sunday school teacher and of all other workers among children—if they have merely taught the child to read, to repeat hymns, and so forth, they have not yet touched their true vocation. We must have the children saved. At this nail we must drive and the hammer must come down upon this head always—if by all means I may save some—for we have done nothing unless some are saved.

Paul does not even say that he tried to *moralize* men. The best promoter of morality is the gospel. When a man is saved, he becomes moral—he becomes more, he becomes holy. But to aim first at morality is altogether to miss the mark, and if we did attain it—as we shall not—yet we should not have attained that for which we were sent into the world. Dr. Chalmers' experience is a very valuable one to those who think that the Christian ministry ought to preach up mere morality, for he says that in his first parish he preached morality and saw no good whatever arising out of his exhortations. But as soon as he began to preach Christ crucified, then there was a buzz and a stir and much opposition—but grace prevailed. He who wishes for perfumes must grow the flowers. He who desires to promote morality must have men saved. He who wants motion in a corpse should first seek life for it and he who desires to see a rightly ordered life should first desire an inward renewal by the Holy Spirit. We are not to be satisfied when we have taught men their duties towards their neighbors or even their duties towards God—this would suffice for Moses, but not for Christ. The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. We teach men what they ought to be, but we do far more—by the power of the gospel applied by the Holy Spirit, we make them what they ought to be by the power of God's Spirit. We put not before the blind the things that they ought to see, but we open their eyes in the name of Jesus. We tell not the captive how free he ought to be, but we open the door and take away his fetters. We are not content to tell men what they must be, but we show them how this character can be attained and how Jesus Christ freely presents all that is essential to eternal life to all those who come and put their trust in Him.

Now observe, brethren, if I, or you, or any of us, or all of us, shall have spent our lives merely in amusing men, or educating men, or moralizing men, when we shall come to give an account at the last great day, we shall be in a very sorry condition and we shall have but a very sorry record to render. For of what use will it be to a man to be educated when he comes to be damned? Of what service will it be to him to have been amused when the trumpet sounds and heaven and earth are shaking and the pit opens wide her jaws of fire and swallows up the soul un-

saved? Of what avail even to have moralized a man if he is still on the left hand of the Judge and if, "Depart, you cursed," shall be his portion? Blood red with the murder of men's souls will be the skirts of professing Christians unless the drift and end and aim of all their work has been to "save some." Oh! I beseech you, especially you, dear friends, who are working in Sunday and Ragged Schools and elsewhere, do not think that you have done anything unless the children's souls are saved. Settle it that this is the top and bottom of the business and throw your whole strength in the name of Christ and by the power of the eternal Spirit into this one object—if by any means you may save some and bring some to Jesus that they may be delivered from the wrath to come.

What did Paul mean by saying that he desired to *save* some? What is it to be saved? Paul meant by that nothing less than *that some should be born again,* for no man is saved until he is made a new creature in Christ Jesus. The old nature cannot be saved—it is dead and corrupt. The best thing that can be done with it is to let it be crucified and buried in the sepulcher of Christ. There must be a new nature implanted in us by the power of the Holy Spirit or we cannot be saved. We must be as much new creations as if we had never been—we must come a second time as fresh from the hand of the Eternal God as if we had been today molded by divine wisdom as Adam was in Paradise. The Great Teacher's words are, "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound thereof, but you cannot tell from where it comes nor where it goes; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." "Except a man is born again from above he cannot see the kingdom of God." This, then, Paul meant, that men must be new creatures in Christ Jesus and we must never rest till we see such a change worked upon them. This must be the object of our teaching and of our praying, indeed, the object of our lives, that "some" may be regenerated.

He meant, beside that, *that some might be cleansed from their past iniquity through the merit of the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God.* No man can be saved from his sin except by the atonement. Under the Jewish law it was written, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." That curse has never been reversed and the only way to escape from it is this—Jesus Christ was made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree." Now, he who believes in Jesus, who puts his hand upon the head of Jesus of Nazareth, the scapegoat of His people, has lost his sins. His faith is sure evidence that his iniquities were of old laid upon the head of the great Substitute. The Lord Jesus Christ was punished in our room and we are no longer obnoxious to the wrath of God. Behold, the sin-atoning sacrifice is slain and offered on the altar and the Lord has accepted it, and is so well pleased that He has declared that whosoever believes in Jesus is fully and eternally forgiven. Now, we long to see men thus forgiven. We pine to bring the prodigal's head to the Father's bosom, the wandering sheep to the Good Shepherd's shoulder, the lost piece of money into the owner's hands and until this is done, nothing is done. I

mean, brethren, nothing spiritually, nothing eternally, nothing that is worthy of the agony of a Christian's life, nothing that can be looked upon as deserving of an immortal spirit's spending all its fires upon it. O Lord, our soul yearns to see Jesus rewarded by the salvation of the blood-bought. Aid us to lead souls to Him.

Once more. When the apostle wished that he might save some he meant that, being regenerated and being pardoned, *they might also be purified and made holy,* for a man is not saved while he lives in sin. Let a man say what he will, he cannot be saved from sin while he is the slave of it. How is a drunkard saved from drunkenness while he still riots as before? How can you say that the swearer is saved from blasphemy while he is still profane? Words must be used in their true meaning. Now, the great object of the Christian's work should be that some might be saved from their sins, purified and made white, and made examples of integrity, chastity, honesty, and righteousness as the fruit of the Spirit of God, and where this is not the case, we have labored in vain and spent our strength for naught.

Now, I declare before you all that I have in this house of prayer never sought anything but the conversion of souls, and I call heaven and earth to witness, and your consciences, too, that I have never labored for anything except the bringing of you to Christ that I might present you at last unto God accepted in the Beloved. I have not sought to gratify depraved appetites either by novelty of doctrine or ceremony, but I have kept to the simplicity of the gospel. I have kept back no part of the price of God's Word from you, but I have endeavored to give you the whole counsel of God. I have sought out no fineries of speech, but have spoken plainly and right straight at your hearts and consciences, and if you are not saved, I mourn and lament before God that up to this day, though I have preached hundreds of times to you, yet I have preached in vain. If you have not closed in with Christ, if you have not been washed in the fountain filled with blood, you are waste pieces of soil from which no harvest has yet come. You tell me, perhaps, that you have been kept from a great many sins, that you have learned a great many truths by coming here. So far so good, but can I afford to live for this, merely to teach you certain truths or keep you back from open sins? How could this content me if I knew all the while that you were still unsaved and must, therefore, after death, be cast into the flames of hell? Nay, beloved, before the Lord I count nothing to be worthy of your pastor's life and soul and energy but the winning of you to Christ. Nothing but your salvation can ever make me feel that my heart's desire is granted. I ask every worker here to see to this, that he never turns aside from shooting at this target and at the center of this target, too, namely, that we may win souls for Christ and see them born to God and washed in the fountain filled with blood. Let the workers' hearts ache and yearn and their voices cry till their throats are hoarse, but let them judge that they have accomplished nothing whatever until at least, in some cases, men are really saved. As the fisherman longs to take fish in his net, as the hunter pants to bear home his

spoil, as the mother pines to clasp her lost child to her bosom, so do we faint for the salvation of souls, and we must have them or we are ready to die. Save them, O Lord, save them for Christ's sake.

But now we must leave that point for another.

II. THE APOSTLE HAD GREAT REASONS FOR SELECTING SUCH AN OBJECT IN LIFE. Were he here I think he would tell you that his reasons were something of this kind. To save souls! *If they are not saved, how God is greatly dishonored*! Did you ever think over the amount of dishonor that is done to the Lord our God in London in any one hour of the day? Take, if you will, this prayer hour, when we are gathered here ostensibly to pray. If the thoughts of this great assembly could all be read, how many of them would be dishonoring to the Most High! But outside of every house of prayer, outside of every place of worship of every kind, think of the thousands and tens of thousands, the hundreds of thousands, who have all this day neglected the very semblance of the worship of the God who has made them and who keeps them in being! Think of how many times the door of the gin-palace has swung on its hinges during this holy hour. Think how many times God's name has been blasphemed at the drinking bar! There are worse things than these, if worse can be, but I shall not lift the veil. Transfer your thoughts to an hour or so later, when the veil of darkness has descended. Shame will not permit us even to think of how God's name is dishonored in the persons of those whose first father was made after the image of God, but who pollute themselves to be the slaves of Satan and the prey of bestial lusts! Alas! Alas! for this city. It is full of abominations of which the apostle said, "It is a shame even to speak of those things which were done of them in secret." Christian men and women, nothing can sweep away the social evil but the gospel. Vices are like vipers and only the voice of Jesus can drive them out of the land. The gospel is the great broom with which to cleanse the filthiness of this city and nothing else will avail. Will you not, for God's sake, whose name is every day profaned, seek to save some? If you will enlarge your thoughts and take in all the great cities of the Continent—yes, further still—take all the idolaters of China and India, the worshippers of the false prophet and the antichrist, what a mass of provocation have we here! What a smoke in Jehovah's nose must this false worship be! How He must often put His hand to the hilt of His sword as though He would say, "Ah! I will ease Myself of My adversaries." But He bears it patiently. Let us not become indifferent to His longsuffering, but day and night let us cry unto Him and daily let us labor for Him if by any means we may save some for His glory's sake.

Think, dear friends, also, of *the extreme misery of this our human race*. It would be a very dreadful thing tonight if you could get any idea of the aggregate of the misery of London at the present moment in the hospitals and the workhouse. Now, I would not say half a word against poverty—wherever it comes, it is a bitter ill, but you will mark as you notice carefully that while a few are poor because of unavoidable circumstances, a very large mass of the poverty of London is the sheer and clear result of

profuseness, lack of forethought, idleness and worst of all, of drunkenness. Ah, that drunkenness! That is the master evil. If drink could be got rid of, we might be sure of conquering the very devil himself. The drunkenness created by the infernal liquor dens which plague the whole of this huge city is appalling. No, I did not speak in haste or let slip a hasty word. Many of the drink-houses are nothing less than *infernal*—in some respects they are worse, for hell has its uses as the divine protest against sin, but as for the gin-palace there is nothing to be said in its favor. The vices of the age cause three-fourths of all the poverty. If you could look at the homes tonight, the wretched homes where women will tremble at the sound of their husband's foot as he comes home, where little children will crouch down with fear upon their little heap of straw because the human brute, who calls himself "a man," will come reeling home from the place where he has been indulging his appetites—if you could look at such a sight and remember that it will be seen ten thousand times over tonight, I think you would say, "God help us by all means, to save some." Since the great axe to lay at the root of the deadly upas tree is the gospel of Christ, may God help us to hold that axe there and to work constantly with it till the huge trunk of the poison tree begins to rock to and fro and we get it down and London is saved, and the world is saved from the wretchedness and the misery which now drips from every bough.

Again, dear friends, the Christian has other reasons for seeking to save some and chiefly because *of the terrible future of impenitent souls*. That veil which hangs before me is not penetrated by every glance, but he who has his eyes touched with heavenly eye-salve sees through it and what does he see? Myriads upon myriads of spirits in dread procession passing from their bodies and passing—*where?* Unsaved, unregenerate, unwashed in precious blood, we see them go up to the solemn bar where in silence the sentence comes forth and they are banished from the presence of God—banished to horrors which are not to be described nor even to be imagined. This alone were enough to cause us distress day and night. This decision of destiny has about it a terrible solemnity. But the resurrection trumpet sounds. Those spirits come forth from their prison-house. I see them returning to earth, rising from the pit to the bodies in which they lived. And now I see them stand—multitudes, multitudes, multitudes. Multitudes—in the Valley of Decision. And HE comes with the crown upon His head and the books before Him, sitting on a great white throne. And there they stand as prisoners at the bar. My vision now perceives them—how they tremble! How they quiver like aspen leaves in the gale! To where can they flee? Rocks cannot hide them! Mountains will not open their bowels to conceal them! What shall become of them? The dread angel takes the sickle, reaps them as the reaper cuts up the tares for the oven, and as he gathers, he casts them down where despair shall be their everlasting torment! Woe is me, my heart sinks as I see their doom and hear the terrible cries of their too-late awaking. Save some, O Christians! By all means save some. By yonder flames and outer darkness and the weeping and the wailing and the

gnashing of teeth, seek to save some. Let this, as in the case of the apostle, be your great, your ruling object in life, that by all means you may save some.

For, oh, if they are saved, *observe the contrast*. Their spirits mount to heaven and after the resurrection their bodies ascend also and there they praise redeeming love. No fingers more nimble on the harp strings than theirs! No notes more sweet than theirs, as they sing, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, be glory forever and ever."

What bliss to see the once rebellious brought home to God and heirs of wrath made possessors of heaven. All this is involved in salvation. O that myriads may come to this blessed state. "Save some"—oh! some at least. Seek that some may be there in glory. Behold your Master. He is your pattern. He left heaven to save some. He went to the cross, to the grave, to "save some." This was the great object of His life, to lay down His life for His sheep. He loved His church and gave Himself for it, that He might redeem her unto Himself. Imitate your Master. Learn His self-denial and His blessed consecration if by any means you may save some.

My soul yearns that I personally may "save some," but broader is my desire than that. I would have *every one of you*, my beloved friends, associated here in church fellowship to become spiritual parents of children for God. Oh, that each of you might "save some." Yes, my venerable brethren, you are not too old for service. Yes, my young friends, you young men and maidens, you are not too young to be recruits in the King's service. If the kingdom is ever to come to our Lord, and come it will, it never will come through a few ministers, missionaries, or evangelists preaching the gospel. It must come through each of you preaching it—in the shop and by the fireside—when walking abroad and when sitting in the chamber. You must all of you be always endeavoring to "save some." I would enlist you all afresh tonight and bind anew the King's colors upon you. I would that you would fall in love with my Master over anew and enter a second time upon the love of your espousals. There is a hymn of Cowper's which we sometimes sing—

"O for a closer walk with God!"

May we get to have a closer walk with Him and if we do so we shall also feel a more vehement desire to magnify Christ in the salvation of sinners. I would like to press the inquiry upon my hearers tonight, you who are saved—How many others have you brought to Christ? You cannot do it by yourself, I know, but I mean how many has the Spirit of God brought by you? How many, did I say? Is it quite certain that you have led any to Jesus? Can you recollect one? I pity you, then! "Write," said Jeremiah, "Write that man childless." That was considered to be a fearful curse. Shall I write you childless, my beloved friends? Your children are not saved, your wife is not saved and you are spiritually childless. Can you bear this thought? I pray you wake from your sleep and ask the Master to make you useful. "I wish the saints cared for us sinners," said a young man. "They do care for you," answered one, "care very much for you."

"Why don't they show it, then?" he asked, "I have often wished to have a talk about good things, but my friend, who is a member of the church, never broaches the subject and seems to study how to keep clear of it when I am with him." Do not let them say this about you. Tell them about Christ and things divine and make this your resolve, every one of you, that if men perish they shall not perish for want of your prayers, nor for want of your earnest and loving instructions. God give you grace, each one of you, to resolve by all means to save some and then to carry out your intention.

III. But my time is almost gone and therefore I have to mention, in the last place, THE GREAT METHODS WHICH THE APOSTLE USED. How did he, who so longed to "save some," set about it? Why, first of all, *by simply preaching the gospel of Christ*. He did not attempt to create a sensation by startling statements. Neither did he preach erroneous doctrine in order to obtain the assent of the multitude. I fear that some evangelists preach what in their own minds they must know to be untrue. They keep back certain doctrines, not because they are untrue but because they do not give scope enough for their ravings and they make loose statements because they hope to reach more minds. However earnest a man may be for the salvation of sinners, I do not believe that he has any right to make any statement which his sober judgment will not justify. I think I have heard at revival meetings of things said and done which were not according to sound doctrine, but which were always excused by "the excitement of the occasion." I hold that I have no right to state false doctrine even if I knew it would save a soul. The supposition is, of course, absurd, but it makes you see what I mean. My business is to bring to bear upon men, not falsehood, but truth and I shall not be excused if under any pretense I palm a lie upon the people. Rest assured that to keep back any part of the gospel is not the right, nor the true method for saving men. Tell the sinner all the doctrines. If you hold Calvinistic doctrine, as I hope you do, do not stutter about it, nor stammer over it, but speak it out. Depend upon it, many revivals have been worthless because a full-orbed gospel was not proclaimed. Give the people every truth, every truth baptized in holy fire, and each truth will have its own useful effect upon the mind. But the great truth is the cross, the truth that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Brethren, keep to that. That is the bell for you to ring. Ring it, man! Ring it! Keep on ringing it. Sound forth that note upon your silver trumpet, or if you are only a ram's horn, sound it forth and the walls of Jericho will come down. Alas for the fineries of our "cultured" modern divines. I hear them crying out and denouncing my old-fashioned advice. This talking about Christ crucified is said to be archaic, conventional, and antique—and not at all suitable to the refinement of this wonderful age. It is astonishing how learned we have all grown lately. We are getting so very wise, I am afraid we shall ripen into fools before long, even if we have not arrived at it already. People want *"thinking"* nowadays, so it is

said, and the working men will go where science is deified and profound "thought" is enshrined. I have noticed that as a general rule wherever the new "thinking" drives out the old gospel there are more spiders than people, but where there is the simple preaching of Jesus Christ, the place is crowded to the doors. Nothing else will crowd a meeting house, after all, for any length of time, but the preaching of Christ crucified. But as to this matter, whether it is popular or unpopular, our mind is made up and our foot is put down. Question we have none as to our own course. If it is foolish to preach up atonement by blood, we will be fools. And if it is madness to stick to the old truth, just as Paul delivered them, in all their simplicity, without any refinement or improvement, we mean to stick to it even if we are put in the stocks as being incapable of progressing with the age, for we are persuaded that this "foolishness of preaching" is a divine ordinance and that the cross of Christ which stumbles so many, and is ridiculed by so many more, is still the power of God and the wisdom of God. Yes, just the old-fashioned truth—if you believe, you shall be saved—that we will stick to and may God send His blessing upon it according to His own eternal purpose. We do not expect this preaching to be popular, but we know that God will justify it before long. Meanwhile, we are not staggered because—

"The truths we love, a sightless world blasphemes
As childish dotage and delirious dreams.
The danger they discern not, they deny—
They laugh at their only remedy, and die."

Next to this, *Paul used much prayer*. The gospel alone will not be blessed. We must pray over our preaching. A great painter was asked what he mixed his colors with and he replied he mixed them with brains. 'Twas well for a painter, but if anyone should ask a preacher what he mixes truth with, he ought to be able to answer—with prayer, much prayer. When a poor man was breaking granite by the roadside, he was down on his knees while he gave his blows and a minister passing by said, "Ah, my friend, here you are at your hard work. Your work is just like mine—you have to break stones, and so do I." "Yes," said the man, "and if you manage to break stony hearts, you will have to do it as I do—go down on your knees." The man was right. No one can use the gospel hammer well except he is much on his knees, but the gospel hammer soon splits flinty hearts when a man knows how to pray. Prevail with God and you will prevail with men. Fresh from the closet to the pulpit let us come, with the anointing oil of God's Spirit fresh upon us. What we receive in secrecy, we are to cheerfully dispense in public. Let us never venture to speak for God to men until we have spoken for men to God. Yes, dear hearers, if you want a blessing on your Sunday school teaching, or any other form of Christian labor, mix it up with fervent intercession.

And then observe one other thing. *Paul went to his work always with an intense sympathy for those he dealt with—a sympathy which made him adapt himself to each case*. If he talked to a Jew, he did not begin at once blurting out that he was the apostle to the Gentiles, but he said he was a Jew, as Jew he was. He raised no questions about nationalities or

ceremonies. He wanted to tell the Jew of Him of whom Isaiah said, "'He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," in order that he might believe in Jesus and so be saved. If he met a Gentile, the apostle to the Gentiles never showed any of the squeamishness which might have been expected to cling to him on account of his Jewish education. He ate as the Gentile ate and drank as he did, sat with him and talked with him. He was, as it were, a Gentile with him, never raising any question about circumcision or uncircumcision, but solely wishing to tell him of Christ who came into the world to save both Jew and Gentile and to make them one.

If Paul met with a Scythian, he spoke to him in the barbarian tongue and not in classic Greek. If he met a Greek, he spoke to him as he did at the Areopagus, with language that was fitted for the polished Athenian. He was all things to all men, that he might by all means save some. So with you, Christian people—your one business in life is to lead men to believe in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit and every other thing should be made subservient to this one object. If you can but get them saved, everything else will come right in due time. Mr. Hudson Taylor, a dear man of God, who has labored much in Inland China, finds it helpful to dress as a Chinaman and wear a pigtail. He always mingles with the people and as far as possible lives as they do. This seems to me to be a truly wise policy. I can understand that we shall win upon a congregation of Chinese by becoming as Chinese as possible and if this is the case, we are bound to be Chinese to the Chinese to save the Chinese. It would not be amiss to become a Zulu to save the Zulus, though we must mind that we do it in another sense than Colenso did. If we can put ourselves on a level with those whose good we seek, we shall be more likely to effect our purpose than if we remain aliens and foreigners and then talk of love and unity. To sink myself to save others is the idea of the apostle. To throw overboard all peculiarities and yield a thousand indifferent points in order to bring men to Jesus is our wisdom if we would extend our Master's kingdom. Never may any whim or conventionality of ours keep a soul from considering the gospel—that were horrible indeed. Better far to be personally inconvenienced by compliance with things indifferent, than to retard a sinner's coming by quarrelling about trifles. If Jesus Christ were here today I am sure He would not put on any of those gaudy rags in which the Puseyite delights himself. I cannot imagine our Lord Jesus Christ dressed out in that style. Why, the apostle tells our women that they are to dress themselves modestly and I do not think Christ would have His ministers set an example of tomfoolery, but yet, even in dress, something may be done on the principle of our text. When Jesus Christ was here, what dress did he wear? To put it in plain English, He wore a smock frock. He wore the common dress of His countrymen—a garment woven from the top throughout, without seam, and I think He would have His ministers wear clothes which are most like the dress which their hearers wear in common, and so even in dress associate with their hearers and be one among them. He would have you

teachers, if you want to save your children, talk to them like children and make yourselves children if you can. You who want to get at young peoples' hearts must try to be young. You who wish to visit the sick must sympathize with them in their sickness. Get to speak as you would like to be spoken to if you were sick. Come down to those who cannot come up to you. You cannot pull people out of the water without stooping down and getting hold of them. If you have to deal with bad characters, you must come down to them, not in their sin, but in their roughness and in their style of language so as to get a hold of them. I pray God that we may learn the sacred art of soul-winning by adaptation. They called Mr. Whitefield's chapel at Moorfields, "The Soul Trap." Whitefield was delighted and said he hoped it always would be a soul trap. Oh that all our places of worship were soul traps and every Christian a fisher of men, each one doing his best, as the fisherman does, by every art and artifice, to catch those they fish for. Well may we use all means to win so great a prize as a spirit destined for eternal weal or woe. The diver plunges deep to find pearls and we may accept any labor or hazard to win a soul. Rouse yourselves, my brethren, for this God-like work and may the Lord bless you in it.

I commend these wandering thoughts to your earnest attention. I pray the ungodly to think of what their ruin will be except they come to Jesus and trust in Him, and I ask believers to be doubly earnest from this time forth in laboring to save the souls of men. And may God send us such a blessing that we shall not have room to receive it. Amen.

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF PROMISE
NO. 1508

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 29, 1879, *BY C H. SPURGEON,* AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"New things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them." Isaiah 42:9.

GOD has often foretold things to come by the lips of His prophets. I need not give you even a single specimen of the multitudes of instances in which events which could not have been guessed at, which indeed were highly improbable and unlikely, were nevertheless foretold by the Spirit of God through the prophets and actually came to pass. The Lord claims this as a proof of His Godhead. It is His special prerogative to possess omniscience, the knowledge of everything and therefore prescience, or the knowledge of that which will happen in years to come. These are attributes of God alone and often He challenges idols to produce instances in which they have exercised foresight and predicted things to come. They had their oracles, which were the mimicry of prophecy, but they continually failed, whereas Jehovah's word stood fast even in jots and tittles and thus His eternal Godhead was proven. The imitation of this attribute by the magicians and prophets of the false gods proved that they saw this to be an exclusive attribute of deity and their perpetual confusion in their attempts proved with equal clearness that their mock deities did not possess it.

I think it most admirable, and it seems another instance of the foresight of the Holy Spirit, that the words of my text should stand where they do, for it may not be unknown to some of you that the modern critics, who always try, if they can, to tear the heart out of every text and are never satisfied until, like swine, they trample beneath their feet every cluster of Eshcol—these modern critics, I say, have dared to ascribe one part of the Book of Isaiah to a second Isaiah, as they call him, who wrote after the times of Christ, because, you see, the prophecy so plainly describes our Lord Jesus Christ that men who will not believe in God, or in the inspiration of His holy book are driven to invent the notion that a prophecy was written after the event. Truly, it might as well have been written afterwards as before, for it is so accurate. But here, as if the Lord foresaw that there would come in the last days scoffers, He bids His servant, in these express words, claim that He speaks things before they come to pass, "Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them." It remains, therefore, for these sham Christian critics either to accept the fact that Isaiah's book contains actual prophecies or else to reject it altogether. Their specious pretense of believing the book to be authentic while they deny its prophetic character is exposed by the words before us.

It is not, however, about prophecy that I am going to speak at this time. I wish to bring forth a general principle—the principle that our gracious Lord usually gives a promise of that which He means to bestow. Before His favors come into our hands, the sound of them falls upon our ears.

Since God is full of mercy and grace, He has resolved to give great blessings to the sons of men, but He gives not without prudent arrangement and therefore His wisdom fixes times for the bestowal of His gifts. A certain fullness of time of which He often speaks was necessary before the coming of Christ. Our Lord could not appear in human flesh until that appointed time had come, but while His wisdom bade Him stay the fulfillment, His love was so great that He must begin to speak of the grand covenant blessing. Before the Lord Jesus came, the Father was continually speaking of His coming. Before He had given Him from His bosom to die, He so delighted in what He was going to do and He took such pleasure in the result of His glorious gift that He must speak about it. And so in countless promises He spoke with the sons of men concerning the great deed of love. This seems to me a clear proof of how heartily He went about the great work of our redemption—because He dwelt so much upon the prospect of it that He revealed His thoughts in prophecy and promise. If you are going to do some kindness to a friend and the time has not quite come for it, yet you cannot keep your purpose a secret. If you think it will minister to his comfort to receive a promise of it, you are sure to give him some cheering hint or comforting intimation. The thought is pleasant to yourself and you wish him to share your anticipation. You wish him to get a sight of the good thing before he gets a taste of it. Before he actually obtains the help itself, you wish to see him cheered with the prospect and so you turn his mind hopefully in the kindly direction. Love is so fond of its object that it is not content with blessing it by a solitary act—before the time comes for the actual blessing, love casts forth a fragrance, as a forecast of the flower which is yet in bloom and not fully opened. It is for this reason that the Lord antedates His mercy and informs His people of things to come before they actually spring forth. Wisdom waits its time to fulfill, as we have said, but grace gives the promise beforehand that it may ease its own soul of the load of its beneficence and give comfort to those who are to receive the blessing.

Hence almost everything that God gives to His people is made a matter of promise. He not only means to bestow the favor, but He tells us He means to bestow it and He has a practical purpose in this information. The philosophy of promise is my topic at this time. Why are covenant blessings the subject of promises? Why does not the Lord give us the blessing without previous intimation? It would be as effectual. Why does He, before it comes, promise it again and again? I shall give five answers to a question which might admit of fifty.

I. And the first is this. GOD SPEAKS THESE THINGS BEFORE THE BLESSING COMES IN ORDER TO DISPLAY HIS GRACE. First, to display *the freeness of His grace*. You will notice that the promise to which He specially alludes is this, "To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prison-

ers from the prison house." Now these blind and captive persons had not sought grace. They had not pleaded for eyes, nor asked for liberty. In fact, they were not even born in the days of Isaiah. It is a case like that of Jacob quoted by Paul, "The children not being yet born," the promise was made irrespectively of them. Unsought, unbought, unthought of, the promise came that He would open the blind eyes and bring the prisoners out of the prison house. This, I say, proves the freeness of God's grace, that He makes a promise before we know our need or seek His face. When He makes a promise of pure grace, He does not come to us and say, "If this," and "if that," and "if the other." But He comes with, "I will," and "I will," and "I will," and "I will," before we seek Him, before we have any desire towards Him, ay, and before we have any sense of need of Him. There are many conditional promises for which we ought to be very thankful, but the foundation of them all is an absolute, unconditioned covenant of grace. A redemption was provided for me before I lived and consequently, before I could have known that I was a slave. The Spirit of God was given that I might live before I knew that I was dead and consequently, before I could have made an appeal for spiritual life. The blessings of the covenant of grace, my dear hearers, were laid up in store for God's chosen people ages ago. Before the Fall actually took place, the covenant had arranged for the recovery of the church of Christ. These blessings have been in existence and provided for many of you, albeit that even now perhaps you do not know your need of them and have not yet begun to seek the Lord that you may find Him, for the Lord, in mighty grace, comes to men long before they come to Him. Their first sincere thought towards Him is caused by His having thought of them.—

"No sinner can be beforehand with Thee.
Your grace is most sovereign, most rich, and most free."

The promise of the covenant runs thus, "I will call them My people that were not My people, and her Beloved that was not beloved." The grace of God comes thus spontaneously from the heart of God and He foretells its working and declares that He will save His chosen in order that it may be seen beyond all dispute to be the outcome of His own deliberate purpose and the act of His sacred sovereignty and boundless love.

I think the Lord also tells us what He is going to do before He does it that we may see *the fullness of His grace*. The Lord says that He will come, not to men who are looking for Him, but to those who have blind eyes and therefore cannot look. He says that He will come, not to those who are coming to Him, though He will do that, but to those who cannot come to Him because they are straightly shut up as in a prison house. Notice the passage—they are blind prisoners and cannot come forth and yet the Lord comes to take the film from their eye and to tear the iron bar from the window and set the captive free, not because there is any goodness in the poor blind prisoner at the present moment, nor because there ever will be any, but simply because the Lord is full of mercy and delights to display His grace. Christ died for the ungodly. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. He is a physician and therefore comes not to

seek the whole, but the sick. To make us know this glorious fairness of His grace, He informs us beforehand of what He is about to do.

Moreover, I think it is not only to show the freeness and the fullness of His grace, but *the power of it,* for He speaks very positively. He says that He will open the blind eyes and He *will* bring out the prisoners from the prison house. Can He do this? Ay, that He can. There can be no question about His ability. When the Lord resolves to save, save He can. Some people believe in a great God in nature, but in a very little God in grace. The God of nature can do everything and they believe in physical miracles, but according to their notions, the God of grace has to consult the will of man and He has to halt and hesitate until the dead man will arise and give himself life and unwilling man will change his own will. I believe in the omnipotence of God in the kingdom of grace and that He can change a heart of stone to flesh and break the iron sinew of the stubborn will and bow men before Him. To me the Almighty is as supreme in the realm of mind as in the world of matter. I do not doubt the free agency of man—on the contrary, I see daily evidence of it. I believe man to be a free agent and yet he is not and cannot be more powerful in any respect than the Lord of all. The Lord knows how to be master in the kingdom of the human will and without violating that will in any degree, He can achieve the eternal purpose of His love. To triumph over mere dead matter is nothing compared with the glory of the Lord's rule over mind, thought, intellect, and will. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion, and yet he that comes to Him, He will in no wise cast out. The Lord's grace is irresistible—His purpose shall stand and He will do all His pleasure. "This is taking high ground," says one. It is ground blessedly high for sinking sinners. It is such ground as we want who are utterly lost and ruined and undone. You that can help yourselves may go and do it, but we who cannot do so are glad to find that God knows what He is going to do and speaks with the tone of a sovereign and with the voice of one who has not to ask help from others, but who can work all things according to the counsel of His own will. "Before they spring forth I tell you of them," He says, because His grace is mighty, He thus speaks of what is going to be done.

Oh listen to me, you blind ones who cannot open your own eyes. Christ has come to open them. O you lost sinners who cannot save yourselves, Christ has come to save you. Oh, you that are all but damned and lie at hell's gate expecting the flame, have hope, for Christ has come to save that which was lost. O you firebrands that almost smoke in the burning, He comes to pluck you out of the fire. He does not come to help you to save yourselves, but to save you. He does not approach you with measured steps in order that you may come half way to meet Him, but He comes all the way to you in your death, your ruin, your poverty, your misery, your blindness, your captivity. He comes to achieve salvation and He proclaims what He is about to do in order that He may have the glory of it.

That is our first head, then. The Lord announces His purposes of love to display His grace.

II. Secondly, brethren, I think the Lord announces the covenant blessings He is about to bestow IN ORDER TO AWAKEN OUR HOPES. Many poor souls would actually die before they were saved if they did not get some little hope, every now and then, while they are in a seeking state. I am not speaking haphazardly now, I am speaking of cases that I do know—poor tempted, troubled ones—to whom the promises are as a brook by the way of which they drink and lift up their heads. Some of you come to Christ apparently very easily. Thank God for it, but I know others who cannot get at the Lord Jesus for the press. They even try to look to Him, but they are blinded by their tears. I cannot excuse their unbelief, but I pity their poor trembling spirits. They are coming to Christ, but they are like the child of whom we read that "when he was a coming the devil threw him down and tore him." They are sadly torn and cannot get to Christ. Now, when the Lord tells His people what He will do, they are cheered with expectation. When they read such texts as these, "A new heart also will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you," and, "I will put My law in your hearts and you shall not depart from Me," and, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more forever." "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool"—these poor souls catch at such words of promise and learn how to hope. "Oh!" they say, "if that promise might be true to me, then I should not perish. Perhaps the Lord will look in mercy upon me." Every now and then the Lord saves a great big sinner—an unusually black sinner—and what does He do with him? He makes him a walking advertisement of His mercy so that others see the infinite grace of God. Men cry out in wonder," What? Has So-and-So found Christ? Then why should not we?" Perhaps the man may have been guilty of great iniquities. He may have been a ringleader in wickedness, but the Lord takes him and washes him from his sin and opens his mouth to praise His name. When such a one begins to speak of divine love, poor tormented spirits catch at the words and they say, "Why should not I find mercy? Why should not I be saved?" When such a man becomes a living proof of what God can do, the promise stands out to the life before the poor sinner's eye and he says, "Ah, perhaps, perhaps, perhaps there is salvation for me." John Bunyan, who had been a drunken tinker, went about preaching the everlasting gospel like a man who had been in the condemned cell and had received a pardon. And I tell you the villagers gathered to listen to such a one as he because they wondered at God's mighty grace. They said, one to another, "Has Mr. Bad-Man become a pilgrim? Then why should we not start our pilgrimage also? Has infinite mercy changed his heart? Then why should it not change ours?"

I would have you pluck up courage, any sinners among you who are here at this time. Supposing you to be the very worst persons that ever lived and supposing you to have the worst temper, the worst disposition, the worst besetting sins, and the worst habits that any men have ever

had, I tell you the Lord in great mercy has saved just such as you and He has promised still to deal with great sinners in a way of great love. Seize hold of this blessed fact. Weave a hope out of it and say, "I need not despair—not even I. I need not plunge into great sin under the notion that I cannot be saved. 'He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.' He can save me. He has said, 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out,' and if I come to Him, He will not cast me out. I will not despair, then, or sit down and say there is no hope. I deserve to be with the devils in hell, but why should I not be among the saints in heaven? I deserve to be banished forever, but why should there not be a crown in heaven for me? Ah, will not the saints wonder when they see me come in? The angels will look down from their harps and say, 'What? Is he here?' Then I will tell the story of what the Lord has done and set them wondering over again, till even they shall say, 'It has never been so seen before. Here comes the biggest, blackest, most hell-deserving wretch that ever did enter heaven. Lift up a loftier song than ever. Louder and louder yet, let the song ring through the heavenly arches, for love has out-loved itself and grace has out-graced itself above all it has ever done before." I pray God that some despairing soul may grasp these cheering facts and be comforted. I am trying to throw the big net to catch a whale of a sinner if he is floating anywhere near my boat. I know if the gospel net once encloses him, it will hold him, for not a single mesh of it will give way despite his size and his struggling. I would like to put the gospel so wide and so broad that the sheep which is hunted by the dog of hell farthest away from the fold may, nevertheless, come back to the great and gracious Shepherd of souls.

Why, beloved, even God's own believing people need to be told of what God will do in order to encourage their hope at times. See how the Lord deals with His persecuted ones. When they are hunted, slandered, despoiled of their goods, what does He do? He makes them know that they have a richer inheritance in heaven. He sets before them the joys which He has prepared for them that love Him. Now, He might, if He liked, have kept all about heaven to Himself and so have made it a surprise to us and indeed, some seem to think that He has done so, but in this they are ill advised. We know much about heaven even now. "Why," says one, "the Scripture says, 'Eye has not seen, neither has ear heard.'" I know it does, but why do you stop in the middle of a text? You make it say the reverse of what it intends to say. Hear the whole of it. "Eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love Him, *but He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit."* By chopping it in halves you made the passage say the very opposite of what it intended. Your eye has not seen it and your ear has not heard it, but His Spirit has told you concerning the things which He has prepared for you, and this is no little privilege. I need not stay to tell you how much the Lord has told us about the eternal state, as to our being with Jesus where He is, that we may behold His glory and may be sharers in that glory forever. He has told us this to cheer us up while on the road, to encourage us that we may never sink in despair. Going to lie

down and die, brother? Do you know how near you are to heaven? Perhaps you will be there in a month. Going to give it all up now? Will you be so foolish as to leave the battle just as the victory is won? Brother, does the devil tell you to turn back? He knows how near you are to the glory-land. You are something like Columbus when he was within three days sail of America and the sailors bade him stay his course. He could not, would not, reverse his venturous ship, but pushed on and found the new world. Some of us may be within a very few days' sail of heaven and yet do not know it—and the devil has the impudence to persuade us to go back. Shall we listen to the impudent fiend? No, by the grace of God, never! If the journey is long, the end will repay us for it. If the voyage is rough, the brave country will make amends for all the tempests which have wreaked their vengeance upon us. Onward, onward, be our course. To help us to persevere even to the end, the Lord has made the new things known to us and has told us of them before they spring forth.

Two good answers to the question are now before us and each one is an argument for adoration.

III. But now, thirdly, why has the Lord told us about the mercies He intends to give? To EXERCISE OUR FAITH. The gospel of God is a gospel for believers and one of God's great objects in the whole arrangement of the gospel system is to educate our confidence in Him. I remember speaking once with a brother upon the room which God has left for faith to work in. We were speaking about the various defenses which have been used to prove the veracity of the Christian religion against infidel assaults and I was remarking upon the manifest failure of certain of them which appeared exceedingly strong at one time, but are now abandoned because under new attacks they have manifestly failed. My friend was deploring that this book and the other, which had once been considered as standard works, seemed to have lost power over this generation. It came to the minds of both of us that if God had made the Christian religion so clear that you could make an axiom of it, or prove it as easily as you show that twice two make four, there would have been no room for faith at all and then the divine system of salvation must have taken another course, for faith would have occupied a very narrow space in it. The Lord intends that men should exercise faith in His Word, for He knows that faith is necessary to us if we are to be delivered from sin. A man cannot be saved if He does not trust His God and when a man is brought to trust His God, he is practically saved. You ask, "How is that?" If a man has a servant and that servant has fallen out with his master, if it is desirable to bring that servant to obedience, the first thing to do is to make him believe in his master. If he believes his master to be good and true and kind and noble, you have gained the servant's obedience. He will be reconciled to his master now and will be right well content to serve him. So that faith and trust, though they appear to be such minor things that we wonder why they should be the great requirement of the gospel, are not small matters after all. They are the pivot upon which character turns. When I bring my mind down to this, that I believe God and accept the Bible as His revelation, I am getting right. If when I cannot under-

stand the Word of God, I believe it as much as if I did understand it, then I have in heart become obedient to God. I have taken up the place which a creature ought to occupy towards His Creator and the act of trusting and believing has become the pivot upon which I turn as my mind seeks the Lord, and by its means I get into a right condition with Him. Therefore does the Lord, before He gives us a mercy, say to us, "Believe in Me and you shall have it. Believe in the atonement made by My dear Son and you shall have pardon. Believe in My willingness to forgive you and submit yourself and cast yourself at My feet and I will forgive and bless you." It is not a hard thing that He requires. It is not a wrong thing. It is an act of the heart which is good for us all round and becomes the instrument in the hand of the Spirit of reconciling us to God.

The Lord has told us what great things He is going to do for sinners and I want you just to answer the question—Do you believe that He can do this? Come now, you that are ungodly and graceless, do you believe that God can save you? Can make you holy? Can make you gracious? You have many sins, but do you believe that Christ can blot them all out in a moment and make you to be as though you had never committed them, casting them behind the back of God Himself, so that they shall never be mentioned against you any more? Can you believe all this? If you can believe it, can you also believe another thing, namely, that He is willing to do this deed of love? Can you believe that the great Father does not will that you should perish and has no joy that you should be lost? Can you believe that it will give Him delight to receive you? That He will be glad to press you to His bosom and make you His child and that you should be reconciled to Him? Can you believe this? By the wounds of God, by the blood of the Son of God on Calvary, I say you ought to believe it, for He that loved sinners well enough to die cannot be unwilling that they should be saved. You can believe His power and His willingness, you say. Well, the only thing that you have to do now, in order to be saved this moment, is to act out your belief upon these two points. He can and He is willing—throw yourself upon that power and will. Trust yourself with Jesus now. That is the one demand of the gospel, "Believe and live." Rest in the fact that He has reconciled you to Himself in Christ and that He forgives you now because you trust alone in His Son for your eternal salvation. Will you do this at once? Will you rest on Christ Jesus? Then, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven." You are a saved man.

"Oh, but how," you ask, "do I know that I am saved?" You shall feel and know that you are saved if you believe, for you shall find yourself from this time loving the things which you did before hate and hating the things which you did once love—and that simple act of trusting which seems so insignificant will transform you and will so become the hinge on which your life shall turn.

Believing in Christ, you shall go out of this house saying, "I am a forgiven man and I love the God who has forgiven me. I am washed in the blood of Christ and henceforth will I serve Him—

'Lord, in the strength of grace,

With a glad heart and free,
Myself, my residue of days,
I consecrate to Thee.'

I am Christ's man forever. I will not grieve Him. By the help of His Holy Spirit, I will live to His praise. I will tell others what He has done for me and my entire life shall be a life of obedience if He will but help me and keep me and sustain me by His gracious power." You see now why the blessings of grace are foretold—that they may become objects of faith. God give you faith to exercise upon them now.

IV. Fourthly, and very briefly, these things are told us before they come to pass THAT THEY MAY EXCITE OUR PRAYER. After hope and faith, prayer is quite sure to follow. Note the order—the Lord says that Christ shall come to open the eyes of the blind—here is *grace*. I pictured the blind man just now as saying, "Jesus is come to open the blind eyes, why should He not open mine?" Here is *hope*. Next the blind man goes on to say, "He says that He will do it if I trust in Him. I know He can. I believe He will. I will trust Him." Here is *faith*. What is the very next thing that the blind man does? Why he begins to pray to Him. "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." Here is *prayer*. As soon as the first little drop of faith falls into a man's soul, he begins to pray, "Lord, You have promised pardon to believers. Give that pardon to me. You have promised a new heart. Give a new heart to me. You have promised eternal salvation to as many as obey Christ. Lord, give me eternal salvation." Oh that blessed gift of faith! It soon brings a man to his knees. When he hopes that he may gain the blessing, when he believes that he may have it—then he begins to cry for it—and if he cries with real faith, he has already obtained the blessing for which he is seeking. While he is pleading, God is hearing.

Think of those poor people in the prison house too. There they sit in darkness and they make no sound but groans. But suddenly a voice is heard. Jesus comes to set the captives free. It is repeated, "He comes, He comes to loose the bondage ones." Inside the prison house, there shines a light in the midst of the darkness and the prisoners say, "If He comes, why should not He come to us? Blessed be His name, we hope He will come to us." And now you can hear them cry, "Come! Come! Come, Lord! Come quickly! Break these chains! Dispel this darkness. Set us free." And it is not long after the prisoner of hope begins to pray, before the walls totter and the captive is free as a bird of the air. The Lord thus, as it were, holds out the mercy so that His dear ones may ask for it, cry for it, struggle for it, and that so they may get the double blessing of being taught to pray as well as to receive the answer of their prayers.

O you that are the people of God, I want you to learn this lesson, that all God's promises which are not fulfilled are meant to stimulate you to pray. We read a chapter just now in which the Lord says that the isles shall wait for God. Pray for it. He has promised to give His Son the heathen for His inheritance. Pray that the heathen may be the heritage of your Prince. Every promise should be turned into prayer. I believe that the whole earth will yet be "filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the

waters cover the sea," but not without prayer. Even Christ must pray. Is it not written, "Ask of Me and I shall give you the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession"? Christ is to come, but He has taught His church to say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." There is no picture of the princely reign of Christ but what should at once arouse our desires and those desires should be set on fire with prayer. Thus says the Lord, "For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." And yet if the Lord does not do some great thing before His church prays greatly, the good time is not coming just yet. We do have good prayer meetings in this Tabernacle, thank God. It is the joy of my heart to see so many assemble to pray, though some of you do not come as I wish you did. You do not know what you lose, you who do not come to our delightful prayer meetings. You are more losers by being away than we are by losing your company. We are sorry to miss you, but our sorrow is on your account, for you do not know what you lose. We ought to meet for prayer—we cannot expect the blessing except we do. I have little to say on that score, by way of rebuke, to you who compose my regular congregation, for you do not, many of you, sin in that direction. But I know some churches where the prayer meeting is a mere form. It is such a little affair that they might put it in a dish, cover it up, lock it up in the pantry, and say nothing about it. It is a miniature concern, a very sick dwarf. If God blessed some churches in London in proportion to their prayers, He would not bless them much, for the prayer meetings are held in the vestry and that is not full, nor one-half full at the best. A prayer meeting in the chapel itself would look like a drop in a bucket and so they hide the nakedness of the land by holding a hole-and-corner meeting in the vestry. Such things as prayer meetings in the chapel are not expected, a snug little room is quite large enough. Alas, there are not many brethren to pray. Two or three prose so long and so drearily that they fill up the evening and then they ask the Lord to forgive their *shortcomings*—they would do better to ask forgiveness for their longcomings which are the death of all fervency.

There is not much prayer in these long sermonizing and the whole business is far more formal than real. Scant will be the blessing if the Lord is going to bless them in proportion to their prayers. Do you wonder that the minister cannot preach when the people do not pray? I see some of you up from the country. Perhaps you are deacons and yet do not attend the prayer meetings yourselves. I have known such things and I cry shame upon you. And then you find fault with the minister. Have you never heard of the minister who suddenly seemed to fail and when the people complained, he said, "Ah, I may well fail, for I have lost my prayer book!" Someone said, "I did not know you used a prayer book, sir." "Oh!" said he, "my prayer book used to be written on the hearts of my people and while they prayed for me, God blessed me and I had success. But they have given up praying for me so what can I do?" Do you want the man to make bricks without straw? Surely the least thing you can do is to find him straw for the bricks and you can only find that by means of earnest, united prayer. The sinew of the minister's strength under God is

the supplication of his church. We can do anything and everything if we have a praying people around us. But when our dear friends and fellow helpers cease to pray, the Holy Spirit hastens to depart and "Ichabod" is written upon the place of assembly. Promises of the mercy of the Lord, dear friends, are sent to you on purpose that you may pray for the covenanted gifts and you shall not have them unless you seek His face for them.

V. Last of all, the Lord tells you what He is going to do and in this He has yet another object in view, namely, TO FOSTER GRATITUDE AND ASSURANCE WHEN THE MERCY HAS BEEN RECEIVED. When the blessing comes, the man who has received it declares, "I know that this came from God because He promised to give it. I know that God was in all this because I can see He has acted according to His own declaration. His Word has not returned to Him void. He has done what He said, when He said, and as He said—surely this thing is of the Lord." Then comes the inference, "If He has done all this for me in the past, He will do as much for me in the future. He told me that He would help me and He has helped me. He assures me still that He will be my Helper and I am sure He will, for He changes not—

"Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through."

This is God's way of breeding assurance in the minds of His people. If you notice in the next chapter, the one argument which God seems to use, there, is, "I will because I have." I will read it to you. "Thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel, Fear not: for *I have* redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine." What then? "When you pass through the waters *I will* be with you and through the rivers they shall not overflow you." Do you think that I have redeemed you to drown you? "When you walk through the fire you shall not be burned." Do you think that I created you to be destroyed and redeemed you that the flames should consume you? *I have* loved you. I have redeemed you. Therefore, I will help you and keep you even to the end." This is God's argument of consolation. Do you not see the force of it? Look in the third verse, "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life." If I paid a full ransom once, I will stick at no expense to gain My precious purchase. If I gave Egypt and Ethiopia once, I will give the same again, and I will have My redeemed ones set free. You are Mine and I will not lose you. I will spend all heaven but what I will bring you safely home to Myself. See, He says, *"I have* created him; *I have* formed him, yes, I have made him," and therefore He says, *"I will* bring your seed from the east and gather you from the west." I know of nothing except the sure promise and oath of the glorious Jehovah which is worthy to be the ultimate foundation of our hope. Beyond that, I know of nothing that is so firm a foundation for our hope as our past experience of the faithfulness of God. If the Lord had meant to be unfaithful, He would have been unfaithful long ago. If it had been possible for Him to cast away His

people, He would have cast you and me away years ago. Does a man bestow much care and labor and expense on that which he intends to leave unfinished? Does a wise man begin to build a house and then leave the structure unroofed and incomplete? Will God begin the work of grace in you and not complete it? Will He bring you so far on the road to the Golden City and then leave you and put you to shame? Shall it be said in eternity, "This man trusted in God and God failed him. This poor sinner rested in the blood of Christ, but Christ could not save him"? Never, oh never! The Lord has given you many a promise and He has fulfilled it in order that today in your present difficulties and tomorrow in your new troubles, you may stand firm as a rock and feel, "He will help me. Yes, He will uphold me. Yes, He will deliver me. Therefore, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."—

"I know that safe with Him remains
Protected by His power,
What I've committed to His hands
Till the decisive hour.
Then will He own His servant's name
Before His Father's face,
And in the New Jerusalem
Appoint my soul a place."

Such faith as this is God's due. He deserves nothing less than unmingled confidence. He has never lied to any of you—never doubt Him till He gives you cause for suspicion, but rest and quietly wait and patiently hope, and you shall see the salvation of God. As surely as the Lord lives, He will not forsake your believing soul, but will be ever at your side till He has done that which He has spoken to you of and brought you home to dwell at His right hand with His dear Son forever and ever. Amen.

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THE BEST OF ALL SIGHTS
NO. 1509

WRITTEN AT MENTONE,
BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"But we see Jesus."
Hebrews 2:9.

IN Holy Scripture faith is placed in opposition to the sight of the eyes and yet it is frequently described as looking and seeing. It is opposed to carnal sight because it is spiritual sight, a discernment which comes not of the body, but arises out of the strong belief of the soul, worked in us by the Holy Spirit. Faith is sight in the sense of being a clear and vivid perception, a sure and indisputable discovery, a realizing and unquestionable discernment of fact. We see Jesus, for we are sure of His presence. We have unquestionable evidence of His existence and we have an intelligent and intimate knowledge of His person. Our soul has eyes far stronger than the dim optics of the body and with these we actually see Jesus. We have heard of Him and upon the witness of that hearing we have believed, and through believing there has come to us a new life which rejoices in new light and in opened eyes, and "we see Jesus." In the old sense of sight, we speak of Him as of one "whom having not seen we love," but in the new sense, "we see Jesus." Beloved reader, have you such a renewed nature that you have new senses and have you with these senses discerned the Lord? If not, may the Holy Spirit yet quicken you and meanwhile, let us whom He has made alive assure you that we have heard His voice, for He says, "My sheep *hear* My voice." We have "*tasted* the good Word of God." We have *touched* Him and have been made whole. We have also known the *smell* of His fragrance, for His name to us is "as ointment poured forth." And now, in the words of our text, "We *see* Jesus." Faith is all the senses in one and infinitely more. And those who have it not are in a worse case than the blind and deaf, for spiritual life itself is absent.

I. Come, then, brethren beloved, whose eyes have been illuminated, let us muse awhile upon our privileges that we may exercise them with delight and praise the Lord with them. First, let us regard the glorious sight of Jesus as COMPENSATION. The text begins with, "But," because it refers to some things which we do not yet see which are the objects of strong desire. "We see not yet all things put under Him." We do not as yet see Jesus acknowledged as King of kings by all mankind and this

causes us great sorrow, for we wish to see Him crowned with glory and honor in every corner of the earth by every man of woman born. Alas, He is to many, quite unknown, by multitudes rejected and despised, and by comparatively few is He regarded with reverence and love. Sights surround us which might well make us cry with Jeremiah, "Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears," for blasphemy and rebuke, idolatry, superstition and unbelief prevail on every side. "But," says the apostle, "we see Jesus," and this sight compensates for all others, for we see Him now, no longer made a little lower than the angels and tasting the bitterness of death, but, "crowned with glory and honor." We see Him, no more after the flesh in shame and anguish, far more ravishing is the sight, for we see His work accomplished, His victory complete, His empire secure. He sits as a priest upon the throne at the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till His enemies are made His footstool.

This is a divine compensation for the tarrying of His visible kingdom, because *it is the major part of it*. The main battle is won. In our Lord's endurance of His substitutionary griefs and in the overthrow of sin, death, and hell by His personal achievements, the essence of the conflict is over. Nothing is left to be done at all comparable with that which is already performed. The ingathering of the elect and the subjection of all things are comparatively easy of accomplishment now that the conflict in the heavenly places is over and Jesus has led captivity captive. We may look upon the conquest of the kingdoms of this world as a mere routing of the beaten host now that the power of the enemy has been effectually broken by the great Captain of our salvation.

The compensation is all the greater because our Lord's *enthronement is the pledge of all the rest*. The putting of all things under Him, which as yet we see not, is guaranteed to us by what we do see. The exalted Savior has all power given unto Him in heaven and in earth—and with this "all power" He can, at His own pleasure, send forth the rod of His strength out of Zion and reign in the midst of His enemies. With Him are all the forces needful for universal dominion. His white horse waits at the door and whensoever He chooses, He can ride forth conquering and to conquer. At a word from His lips, the harlot of Babylon shall perish and the false prophet shall die and the idols of the heathen shall be utterly abolished. The empire of wickedness is as a vision of the night, a black and hideous nightmare pressing on the soul of manhood, but when He awakes, He will despise its image and it shall melt away.

Turn we then, wiping our tears away, from the wretched spectacles of human superstition, skepticism, and sorrow to the clear vision above us

in the opened heaven. There we see "the Man," long promised, the desire of all nations, the deliverer, the death of death, the conqueror of hell—and we see Him not as one who girds on His harness for the battle, but as one whose warfare is accomplished, who is waiting the time appointed of the Father when He shall divide the spoil. This is the antidote to all depression of spirit, the stimulus to hopeful perseverance, the assurance of joy unspeakable.

II. Nor is this sight a mere compensation for others which as yet are denied us—it is in itself the cause of present EXULTATION. This is true in so many ways that time would fail us to attempt to enumerate them. "We see Jesus" and in Him *we see our former unhappy condition forever ended*. We were fallen in Adam, but we see in Jesus our ruin retrieved by the second Adam. The legal covenant frowned upon us as we beheld it broken by our first federal head. The new covenant smiles upon us with a whole heaven of bliss as we see it ordered in all things and sure in Him who is Head over all things to the church. Sin once doomed us to eternal despair, but not now, for He who has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself has justified His people by His resurrection. The debt no longer burdens us, for there in eternal glory is the Man who paid it once and for all. A sight of Jesus kills each guilty fear, silences each threat of conscience, and photographs peace upon the heart. There remains nothing of all the past to cause a dread of punishment, or arouse a fear of desertion, for Christ who died ever lives to make intercession for us, to represent us before the Father, and to prepare for us a place of everlasting rest. We might see ourselves as dead under the law were it not that He has blotted out the handwriting which was against us. We might see ourselves under the curse were it not that He, who was once made a curse for us, now reigns in fullness of blessing. We weep as we confess our transgressions, but we see Jesus and sing for joy of heart, since He has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness.

The same is sweetly true of the present, for *we see our present condition to be thrice blessed by virtue of our union with Him*. We see not as yet our nature made perfect and cleansed from every tendency to evil—rather do we groan, being burdened because of the sin which dwells in us—the old man which lusts and rebels against the blessed dominion of grace. And we might be sorely cast down and dragged into despair were it not that "we see Jesus" and perceive that in Him we are not what the flesh would argue us to be. He represents us most truthfully and looking into that mirror we see ourselves justified in Christ Jesus, accepted in the Beloved, adopted of the Father, dear to the Eternal heart. Yes, in Him

raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenlies. We see self and blush and are ashamed and dismayed, "but we see Jesus" and His joy is in us and our joy is full. Think of this, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the next time you are upon the dunghill of self-loathing. Lift up now your eyes and see where He is in whom your life is hid! See Jesus and know that as He is, so are you before the Infinite Majesty. You are not condemned, for He is enthroned. You are not despised nor abhorred, for He is beloved and exalted. You are not in jeopardy of perishing, nor in danger of being cast away, for He dwells eternally in the bosom of the Lord God Almighty. What a vision is this for you, when you see Jesus and see yourself complete in Him, perfect in Christ Jesus!

Such a sight effectually *clears our earthly future of all apprehension*. It is true we may yet be sorely tempted and the battle may go hard with us, but we see Jesus triumphant and by this sign we grasp the victory. We shall perhaps be subjected to pain, to poverty, to slander, to persecution, and yet none of these things move us because we see Jesus exalted and therefore know that these are under His power and cannot touch us except as He grants them His permission so to do. Death is at times terrible in prospect, but its terror ceases when we see Jesus who has passed safely through the shades of the sepulcher, vanquished the tyrant of the tomb, and left an open passage to immortality to all His own. We see the pains, the groans, and dying strife—see them, indeed, exaggerated by our fears—and the only cure for the consequent alarm is a sight of Him who has said, "He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." When we see Jesus—past, present, and to come—we are summed up in Him and over all shines a glorious life which fills our souls with unspeakable delight.

III. Thirdly, "we see Jesus" with gladdest EXPECTATION. His glorious *person* is to us the picture and the pledge of what we shall be 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." In infinite love, He condescended to become one with us here below, as says the apostle, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." And this descent of love on His part to meet us in our low estate is the assurance that His love will lift us up to meet Him in His high estate. He will make us partakers of His nature, inasmuch as He has become partaker of our nature. It is written, "Both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." What bliss is this that we should be like to the incarnate God! It would seem

too good to be true, were it not after the manner of our Lord to do great things for us and unsearchable.

Nor may we alone derive comfort as to our future from His person, we may also be made glad by a hope as to His place. Where we see Jesus to be, there shall we also be. His heaven is our heaven. His prayer secures that we shall be with Him where He is, that we may behold His glory. Today we may be in a workhouse, or in the ward of a hospital, or in a ruinous hovel, "but we see Jesus" and we know that before long we shall dwell in the palace of the great King.

The glory of Jesus strikes the eyes at once and thus we are made to exult in His position, for it, too, is ours. He will allow us to sit upon His throne, even as He sits upon the Father's throne. He has made us kings and priests unto God and we shall reign forever and ever. Whatever of rest, happiness, security, and honor our glorious Bridegroom has attained, He will certainly share it with His spouse—yes, and all His people shall know what it is to be heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified together.

How soon our condition shall rise into complete likeness to the ascended Lord we cannot tell, but it cannot be long and it may even be a very short time. The veil of time is, in some cases very thin—another week may be the only separation. And then! Ah, then! We shall see Jesus and what a sight will it be. Heaven lies in that vision. 'Tis all the heaven our loving hearts desire.

The sight of Jesus which we now enjoy is a foretaste of the clearer sight which is reserved for us and therefore it will be a happy wisdom to be much in the enjoyment of it. A thousand things tempt us away and yet there is not one of them worth a moment's thought in comparison.

What are works of art and discoveries of science compared with our Beloved? What are the gems which adorn the brow of beauty or the eyes which flash from the face of loveliness, if placed in rivalry with Him? Other matters, weighty and important, call for our thought and yet even these we may place in a second rank when Jesus is near.

We may not be doctors of divinity, much as we would desire to be deeply instructed in the truths, "but we see Jesus." Into many mysteries we cannot pry, "but we see Jesus." Where the divine sovereignty harmonizes with human responsibility is too deep a problem for us, "but we see Jesus." The times and the seasons baffle us, the dispensation of the end is dark to us, "but we see Jesus." Glory over us, you far-seeing prophets! Deride us, you deep-glancing philosophers! We leave you to your boastings. We are poor, short-sighted beings, and know but little—but one

thing we know—whereas we were once blind, now we see and "we see Jesus."

This sight has made us unable to see many things which now dazzle our fellow men. They can see priestly power in a certain set of men like themselves. This we cannot see, for "we see Jesus," as ending the line of sacrificing priests and bestowing a common priesthood upon all the saints. Many see great wisdom in the various schools of doubt in which we see nothing except pretentious folly, for "we see Jesus" and all human wisdom pales before the wisdom of God which is perfected in Him.

Certain of our brethren see perfection in the flesh, "but we see Jesus." Others see the church and their own sect, "but we see Jesus." A few see nothing but their own separateness from everybody else and the peculiar excellence of their exclusiveness, "but we see Jesus."

Come, beloved, let us get to our secret chambers of communion and see Jesus there as from the hill of Pisgah. Let us turn the pages of Scripture and see Jesus there amid the beds of spices. Let us frequent ordinances, especially the breaking of bread, and see Jesus there. Let us watch in our experience as we are conformed unto His sufferings and see Him there. Let us go into the field of holy labor and as we gird ourselves and put on the yoke of service, let us see our Master there. Yes, in all things let us learn to see our Lord, for nature and providence, experience and Scripture are hung with mirrors which reflect Him. Till the day breaks and the shadows flee away, let us continue to gaze upon Him, till our eyes shall actually see Him for ourselves and not another. Be this the grand distinction of our lives—whatever others may see or not see, "WE SEE JESUS."

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"His strength shall be hunger-bitten."
Job 18:12.

BILDAD was declaring the history of the hypocritical, presumptuous and wicked, man and he intended, no doubt, to insinuate that Job was just such a person—that he had been a deceiver and that therefore at last God's providence had found him out and was visiting him for his sins. In this, Bildad was guilty of great injustice to his friend. All the three miserable comforters of Job were mistaken in the special aim of their discourses and yet, concerning the speeches of each one, it may be said that their general statements were, for the most part, true. They uttered truths, but they drew mistaken inferences and they were ungenerous in the imputations which they cast upon Job. It is true that, sooner or later, either in this world or the next, all conceivable curses fall upon the hypocrite and the ungodly man, but it is not true that when a Christian is in trouble, we are to judge that he is suffering for his sin. It would be both cruel and wicked for us to think so. Nevertheless, because what Bildad said was, in the main, true, though unkindly and wrongly applied, we feel ourselves quite at liberty to take a text out of his mouth.

It is true of many persons that their strength shall be hunger-bitten and I shall speak concerning these words in three ways, noticing, first, that *this is a curse which will surely be fulfilled upon the ungodly.* Secondly, *this is a discipline which God often exercises upon the self-righteous when He means to save them.* And, thirdly—and it is grievous work to have to say it—*this is a form of chastisement upon believers who are not living near to God as they ought to be*—their strength becomes hunger-bitten.

I. First we shall view our text as A CURSE WHICH WILL BE FULFILLED UPON THE UNGODLY. "His strength shall be hunger-bitten." It is not said that *they* are hunger-bitten merely, but that their strength is so, and if their *strength* is hunger-bitten, what must their weakness be? When a man's strength is bitten with hunger, what a hunger must be raging throughout the whole of his nature.

Now, a large proportion of men make their gold to be their strength, their castle, and their high tower and for a while they rejoice in their wealth and find great satisfaction in gathering it, in seeing it multiplied, and in hoping by-and-by that it shall come to great store. But every un-

godly man ought to know that riches are not forever and often they take to themselves wings and fly away. Men of colossal fortunes have dwindled down to beggars. They made great ventures and realized great failures. None are secure. As long as a man is in this world, he is like a ship at sea, he is still liable to be shipwrecked. O you that are boasting in your gold and calling your treasure your chief good, the day may come when your strength will be hunger-bitten and like the victims of famine, you will find yourselves helpless—you whose money aforetime answered all things and made you feel omnipotent.

But it will be said, of course, that it is not in every case that the ungodly man's strength of wealth is hunger-bitten and I willingly concede it. But it comes to pass in another fashion. How many there are who keep their wealth and yet, for all that, are very poor? It is not that the gold goes, but it stays by them and does not comfort them. I do not know which would be the worse of the two—to be hungry for want of bread or to have abundance of bread and yet remain hungry, eat whatever you might. Thousands in this world are precisely in that condition. They have all that heart could wish, if their heart were right, but it seems nothing to them because they have envy in their spirits. Remember Haman. He is invited to the banquet of wine. He is a chief noble of the empire. He has his monarch's favor, but all that avails him nothing because Mordecai sits in the gate. Envy has cankered his soul and if he were able to mount to the throne of Ahasuerus himself, it would make no difference to him—he would be unhappy there—and all because one poor Jew will not bow to him. There are persons going up and down Cheapside every day who are intolerably wretched about a something which they would hardly like to mention to reasonable men. A wretched trifle frets them like a moth in a garment and all the glory of their position is eaten away—their strength is hunger-bitten.

Where the canker does not happen to be envy, it may come to be a passion akin to it, namely, revenge. Alas, that we should have to talk of revenge as still existing upon this earth after Christ has been here and taught us to pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Yet there are ungodly men who even think it right to foster resentments. A word uncourteously spoken, a deed unkindly done will be laid up and an opportunity sought for retaliation. Or if not, a hope will be cherished that some blight or blow from God may fall upon the offender. And if that offender still bears himself aloft and lives right merrily and makes no recompense for the wrong done, the aggrieved one has eaten out his own heart with chagrin and the strength of his wealth has been hunger-bitten.

Where this has not been the case, it has, perhaps, more frequently happened that persons have been afflicted by avarice. Nothing more tends to impoverish a man than being rich. It is a hard thing to find a

rich man who enjoys riches. A rich man is a man who has all he wants and many a man is rich on a few shillings a week. A poor man is a man who does not get what he wants and people with thousands a year are in that list. In fact, where shall you find such poverty as among those poor rich men? The miser is often pictured as afraid to sleep because thieves may break in—he rises at midnight to look over his hoarded treasure. He is afraid lest bonds, securities, mortgages and the like may, after all, turn out to be mere waste paper. He frets and stews and mars his life because he has too great a means of living—such a man may not be very common, but it is an easy thing to find people who have very much and yet are just as careful, just as grasping, just as fretful after more as if they had but newly started in business and were almost penniless—their strength is hunger-bitten. If somebody had told them, "You will one day reach to so many thousand pounds," they would have said, "Ah, if ever I get that amount I shall be perfectly satisfied." They have saved that sum long ago and ten times as much, and now they say, "Ah, you don't know what it is to want money till you have a good portion of it. Now we have so much we must have more. We are up to our necks in the golden stream and we must needs swim where the bottom cannot be touched." Poor fools! They have enough water to float them, but they must have enough to drown in. One stick is a capital thing for a lame man, as I know right well, but a thousand sticks would make a terrible load for a man to carry. When anyone has a sufficiency, let him be thankful for so convenient a staff, but if he will not use what he has until he has accumulated much more, the comfort of his substance is gone and his strength is hunger-bitten.

There are cases in which the hunger-bite does not take a shape which I could well describe. Instances are met with of persons who have made their gold their strength, who are altogether unrestful. Some have thought that their brain was diseased, but it is likely that the disease was lower down and in their hearts. We have known wealthy men who believed themselves to be poor and were haunted with the idea that they should die in the poor house, even when they were worth a million. And others who have quarreled about the division of a farthing, when the loss of ten thousand pounds would have been a flea bite to them. In great substance they have found no substantial rest. They have often wished they could be as cheerful as their own menial servants. As they have lolled in their carriage and looked at the rosy cheeks of the urchins in the village, they have coveted their health and felt willing to wear their rags if they could possess their appetites. As they have looked upon poor persons with family loves and domestic joys and felt that their own joys were few in that direction, they have greatly envied them. It is a great mercy when the worldling is made uneasy in this world—it is a ground for hope that God means to wean him from his idols. But alas, there are some

who do not rest *here* and will not rest hereafter. They have no rest in all that God has given them under the sun and yet they will not fly to Him who is the soul's sure repose.

I need not dwell for another moment upon the failure of the strength which is found in riches. It is the same with all sorts of men who try to find comfort out of Christ and away from God, "Their strength shall be hunger-bitten." What a melancholy instance of this is Solomon.

He had an opportunity to try everything in his quest for the chief good and in fact, he did test everything, so that we need not repeat the experiment. He was the great alchemist who tried to turn all manner of metals into gold, but failed with them all. At one time he was building great palaces and when the building fit was on him, he seemed happy. But when once the gorgeous piles were finished, he said, "Vanity of vanities: all is vanity." Then he would take to gardening and to the planting of rare plants and trees and to the digging of fountains, but when he had done enough of this, he looked upon his orchards and vineyards and again muttered, "Vanity of vanities: all is vanity." Then he thought he would try laughter and madness—the comic side of human life he would test, as well as the useful. So he plunged into all manner of pleasures and gathered to himself singing men and singing women and all delights of the flesh, but after he had drank deep of that cup, he said again, "Vanity of vanities: all is vanity." Poor Solomon! He had great strength, but his strength was hunger-bitten. He looked here and there, up and down, on the right hand and on the left, and found no bread for his soul. He snatched at shadows and tried to feed himself with bubbles. He was devoured with hunger in the midst of plenty and where the humble people of Israel were blessing the God who satisfied their mouth with good things and renewed their youth like the eagles, poor Solomon was complaining that there was nothing new under the sun and that it was better for a man not to be born than to have lived at all.

Now remark that if this hunger does not come upon the ungodly man during the former part of his life, it will come to him at the close of it. While we have much to do and our minds are occupied, we may be able to put off thought, but when at last God sends to us that messenger with the bony hand, whose oratory is soul piercing—the dullness of whose eyeless eye darts fire into the soul—then will all human strength be hunger-bitten. When death is left alone with the man, then he perceives that his money bags contain nothing precious, because he must leave them. How now with his broad acres? How now with his large estates? How now with his palatial residence? How now with all that he called dear? How now with his doctor's degree and his learning? How now with his fame and his honor? How now even with his domestic comforts and the joys of life? Hunger-bitten are they all. When he comes to die, they cannot help him. The soul that is within him, which he would not allow to

speak, now opens its hungry mouth and cries, "You have denied me bread. God, and God alone, could fill me and you have denied me God. And now you feel the hunger which has come upon me and you *must* feel it and feel it, too, forever." Alas, alas, alas, for a man to have spent all his life in earning a disappointment, laboring hard to lose his soul, sweating and straining to lose the race, tugging and toiling to be damned, for that is the case of many a man and that is where the tide drifts with all mankind who seek for lasting good apart from God and apart from the blood and righteousness of God's dear Son. Of each one of them it shall be said, "His strength shall be hunger-bitten."

I have said these things mournfully to my own heart. But I would say to any of you who may not be rich, but who are looking for your good in your own little home and the comforts of it—any of you young men who are seeking the great object of life in learning or the like—if you are not living for God, your strength will be hunger-bitten. If you do not "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," whatever you gain and however satisfied you may be for a little while, an awful hunger must ultimately come upon you and you will then lament that you spent your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfies not.

II. Briefly, in the second place, we shall speak of our text as indicating A KIND OF DISCIPLINE THROUGH WHICH GOD PUTS THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS WHEN HE MEANS TO SAVE THEM. Many people are very religious and yet are not saved. They are unsaved because they go about to establish their own righteousness and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness which is of God in Jesus Christ. Now, these persons may for a while be very well satisfied with their own righteousness and if they are not the children of God, they will be satisfied with it for life. Some of them talk in this way, "I don't know that I ever wronged anybody. I have always been honest and honorable in my transactions and I have brought up my children respectably. I have had a hard fight of it and for all that nobody could say that I ever disgraced my character." It is not very long ago that I was driven by a cabman, an aged man, and when I got out of his cab I referred to his age and he remarked upon it himself. I said, "Well, I trust when this life is over you will have a portion in a better world." "Yes, I think so, sir," he said. "I was never drunk, that I know of, in my life. I was always reckoned a civil man. I never used bad language and I go to church sometimes." He seemed to be perfectly satisfied and was quite astonished that I did not express my assurance of his safety. His confidence is the common reliance of all classes of Englishmen and though they may not always put it in that shape, yet that is the notion—that by a sort of goodness, a very poor and mangled goodness—men may, after all, enter heaven. Now, when God means to save a man, the hunger of the heart comes in and devours all his boasted excellence.

Why, a spiritually hungry soul would take fifty years of self-righteousness and swallow them up like a morsel and cry for more. Our goodness is nothing compared with the demands of the law and the necessities of the case. Our fine righteousnesses, how they shrivel up like autumn leaves when the Spirit of God acts as a frost to them. Our virtues are as a meadow in the spring bedecked with golden kingcups, but when the Spirit of God blows upon it, the grass withers and the flowers fade, for all flesh is grass and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of grass. It is a part of the operation of the Holy Spirit to wither all the goodliness of human nature and to destroy all those lovely flowers of natural virtue in which we put such store, cutting them down as with a mower's scythe. In truth, there is none good, no, not one. We are all shut up in unbelief and sin by nature. In the best of natures, sin affects the whole body, "The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint"—and it is a great blessing when the Holy Spirit makes us feel this. Painful is the feeling, but blessed is the result when, once and for all, our strength is hunger-bitten.

Yes, and there are some who are very satisfied because, in addition to a commendable life, they have performed certain ceremonies to which they impute great sanctity. There is a theory abroad nowadays which some persons who are not in either the lunatic or the idiot asylum believe, namely, the theory that sacramental performances convey grace. It is wonderful how a rational being can ever think so, but there are persons who are apparently rational in other things, who believe that the sprinkling of drops of water upon an infant's brow regenerates it, that the eating of bread and the drinking of wine really convey Christ to the soul, and so on, that aqueous applications and materialistic festivities can bring spiritual good to the heart—a monstrous doctrine worthy of the priests of Baal—but so foolish as to make one doubt his ears when he hears it stated. Because they have gone through these operations and have been confirmed and I do not know what besides, many are content. Others who happen to belong to a dissenting community, have passed through the ordeal of joining the church or have attended class meetings and have subscribed to the various societies think they are saved. Heirs of hell will rest content with such outward things, but heirs of heaven never can. Their strength, if they make external religion their strength, will by-and-by be hunger-bitten and they will cry out," My God, my soul pants for You as the hart pants for the water-brooks. I cannot be satisfied with outward forms, I want inward grace and I cannot be content with being told that the grace went with the form. I want to know the grace of God in truth. I long to feel it. I pine to exhibit it in my own life." To be told I was born again when I was a babe will not satisfy me. I want to feel the inner life, the new life of God within my spirit. To be told that I did eat Christ when I ate the bread will not content me. My heart longs to

know that Christ is really in me the hope of glory and that I am living upon Him. If I cannot have communion with God and with His dear Son for myself in my very soul, I turn with loathing from every substitute, ritualistic, priestly, or otherwise. Beloved, I would have you flee from every sacrament to the Savior. I would have you fly away from ceremonies to the cross of Christ. There is your only hope. Look to Him by faith—for all the rest without this is but outward and carnal and can minister no good to your spirit. May your strength be hunger-bitten if you are resting in anything which is external and unspiritual.

Many a person has known what it is to have this hunger-bite go right through everything he rested in. I once knew what it was to get a little comfort from my prayers before I found the Savior, but when the Spirit of God dealt with me, I saw that my prayers wanted praying over again. I thought I had some sort of repentance and I began to be contented with it, but when the Spirit of God came, I found that my repentance needed to be repented of. I had felt some confidence in my Bible readings and hoped that my regular attendance upon public worship would bring me salvation, but I found that I was after all mocking the Word, for I was reading it, but not believing it, hearing it, but not accepting it. I was increasing my knowledge and my responsibility and yet was not rendering obedience to God. Dear soul, if you are resting anywhere short of Christ, may your strength be hunger-bitten. You are at your strongest when you are utter weakness apart from Him. When you rest in Him completely and alone, then is salvation accomplished in you, but not till then. May God in His infinite mercy grant that all your strength apart from Christ may be hunger-bitten and that speedily.

III. Lastly, and very earnestly—and perhaps this last part may have more reference to most of you than anything I have said—I believe THERE ARE MANY OF GOD'S SERVANTS WHOSE STRENGTH IS LAMENTABLY HUNGER-BITTEN. In this age we are all busy, and through being busy we are apt to neglect the soul-feeding ordinances. I mean the reading of Scripture, the hearing of the Word, meditation upon it, prayer and communion with God. Some of you do not rise as soon as you might in the morning and prayer is hurried over. And too often at eventide you are half-asleep with the many cares of the day and prayer is offered in a slovenly way. Nor is this all, for during the day when, if you were as you should be, you would be praying without ceasing, there is this to think of and that and the other—and such a pressure of business that prayers are few. How can you pray? You did at one time. You used to get a text of Scripture in the morning and chew it all day, and you used to get much sweetness out of it and your soul grew. But now, instead of a text of Scripture, you have pressing engagements as soon as you are out of bed. You would, now and then, steal into a mid-day prayer meeting, perhaps, or get two or three minutes alone, but you have gradually dropped that

habit and you have felt justified in doing so for, "really, time is so precious and there is so much to do in this age of competition." Dear friend, I am no judge for you, but let me ask you whether you are not becoming hunger-bitten through not feeding upon the Word of God. Souls cannot be strong without spiritual meat any more than bodies can be well when meals are neglected. There is a good rule I have heard mothers say about children and chickens—"little and often"—and I think it is true with Christians. They need little and often during the day—not a long passage of Scripture, perhaps memory would fail, but a short passage now and a short passage then and a little prayer here and a little prayer there. It is wonderful how souls grow in that way! Alas! I fear all this is neglected and spiritual strength is hunger-bitten. Let us begin from this time forward to give attention to the sustenance of our souls. Let us daily feed upon the Word of God that we may grow thereby, so shall our strength no more be hunger-bitten.

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